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John Wingate Weeks



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HAN OF ICELAND

VOLUME II





VICTOR HUGO

HAN OF ICELAND

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN CHESTERFIELD

VOLUME II



PHILADELPHIA
GEORGE BARRIE & SON

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HAN OF ICELAND

Chi Courtry AG





XXV.

LION—[*Roaring*]. Oh—

DEMETRIUS.—Well roared, Lion.

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V.

SHAKESPEARE.

The traveler who nowadays explores the snow-covered mountains which surround Lake Smiasen like a white coverlet, do not find a single vestige of what the seventeenth century Norwegians called the ruin of Arbar. We will never be able to tell what sort of human structure, what kind of edifice, the ruin was, if we can give it that name. Coming out of the forest which surrounded the southern part of the lake, after having climbed the remains here and there of walls and the remains of the towers, one noticed an open arch which pierced the flank of the mountain. This opening, nowadays entirely filled up with earth, was the entrance to a sort of gallery cut in the living rock. This gallery, feebly lighted by conical vents, built in the vault at regular distances, ended in a sort of oblong oval hall half cut in the rock and half of Cyclopean

masonry. Around this hall one noticed, in deep niches, rudely carved figures of granite. Some of these mysterious effigies, fallen from their pedestals, lay pell-mell on the flags, with others shattered beyond recognition, covered with weeds and moss, across which glided lizards, spiders and all hideous insects which live in the earth and in ruins. Daylight never penetrated into this place except by a door opposite the mouth of the gallery. This door, viewed from a certain side, had an ogive form, but roughly done, without period and without date, and evidently arranged by the architect by chance. One might have called this door a window, since it opened upon an immense precipice ; and one could not understand where three or four steps, cut in the edge, outside and below this singular outlet, could lead.

This hall was on the inside, a sort of gigantic tourelle, which, from a distance, seen from the side of the precipice, seemed like one of the peaks of the mountain. This tourelle was isolated, and, as we have already said, no one knew to what edifice it had belonged. One could only see, above, on a plateau inaccessible to the most daring hunter, a mass which may be taken, on account of the distance, for a curved rock on the débris of a colossal arcade. This tourelle and fallen arcade were known to

the peasants under the name of the ruins of Arbar. They know no more of the origin of the name than of the origin of the mountains.

Seated upon a stone placed in the middle of this elliptical hall, was a little man, clothed in the skins of animals, whom we have already many times had occasion to meet in the course of this work. His back was turned to the light, which, at the most, was only a dim twilight in the sombre tourelle even while at midday.

He was leaning over some object, not distinguishable, but evidently a living body, by the slight perceptible motion and the feeble groans which issued from it. The little man now and again took long draughts of some warm liquid from a goblet formed of a human skull.

All at once he rose suddenly.

"Some one is in the gallery. Can the chancellor of two kingdoms have arrived?"

These words were followed by a burst of laughter, ending in a savage roar, which was suddenly taken up by a howl.

"Oh, oh!" said the denizen of the ruin of Arbar. "This is no man, but a wolf; an enemy, for all that."

Indeed, suddenly a fierce-eyed wolf appeared, and crept stealthily toward the man, who stood with folded arms watching him.

"Ah! so it is the old grizzly wolf, the oldest of the forests of Smiasen. Good day, wolf, how are you? There is a brightness about your eyes; you are famished, and the scent of a corpse attracts you. What an attraction you will soon be for hungry wolves! You are welcome, Smiasen Wolf; I have always longed to meet you; and you have arrived at such an age that people believe you will never die. They will not say that to-morrow."

The animal sprang back with a fearful howl, and then bounded forward on to the little man.

He did not move a step. Quick as lightning with his right hand he seized the wolf, who had planted his claws on the man's shoulders: with the other he caught the animal by the throat, to protect his face from its gaping jaws, with such a grasp that the wolf howled with pain.

"Wolf of Smiasen," said the man triumphantly, "you are tearing my jacket; but your skin will make a good substitute!"

He had just followed his shout of victory with some curious jargon, when the wolf gave a sudden jerk, which threw them both to the ground. The cries from the man were mingled with the howls of the beast.

Compelled by the fall to release the animal's throat, the little man soon felt his shoulder

pierced with its sharp teeth. Thus rolling over one another, the combatants struck against an enormous white mass lying in the darkest part of the room.

It consisted of a bear, who rose growling, thus awakened from his heavy slumbers.

When he could distinguish what was going forward, he made a furious bound—not on the man, but on to the wolf, who was gaining ground, and seizing him violently, he freed the adversary with the human face.

The latter, completely blood-stained, rose up. Far from showing gratitude for so great a service, the man treated the bear as a man does his dog when in disgrace—kicked him.

“Friend, who called you? Mind your own business!” said he, furiously gnashing his teeth.

“Be off,” added he, reddening.

The bear, who had been kicked by the man and bitten by the wolf, gave forth a plaintive moan, and retired, thus releasing the famished animal, who threw himself on to the man with renewed vigor.

While the struggle continued the bear remained quietly in his sleeping quarters, stroking down his white muzzle with his paws, and looking on the two enemies with the utmost indifference.

But the little man, when the wolf returned to the charge, seized him by the muzzle, and

then caught hold of his throat. The animal, both from rage and pain, made desperate struggles for release. He foamed at the mouth, and his eyes seemed ready to start from his head. Of the two adversaries, he whose bones were splintered by the sharpest of fangs, whose flesh was torn by fierce nails, belonged not to the man, but the wild beast; the savage expressions and the frightful howling came not from the wild beast, but from the man.

At last, weakened by the wolf's long resistance, Han made a final effort, and grasped him with both hands by the muzzle, till blood flowed from the nose and mouth; his eyes half-closed, and he fell at his conqueror's feet. Feeble movements and trembling showed that he was not yet entirely dead.

All at once a convulsive movement shook the dying animal, and life soon ceased to exist.

"So you are dead!" said the little man, kicking the body contemptuously. "Did you think to lengthen your days after meeting me? You won't follow scent in quest of prey again through the snow. The wolves and vultures will now have their turn, and take it out of you. What lost travelers about Smiasen you must have devoured during your long, murderous career! Now, there you lie dead, never again to feast on man—more is the pity!"

Using a sharp flint, he soon dismantled the wolf, and covered himself with the animal's warm and gory skin, turned inside out. His shoulders, torn by the wolf's fangs, were thus out of sight.

"I must," growled he, between his teeth, "clothe myself in the skin of beasts, for that of man is too thin to protect me from the cold."

Whilst thus meditating, he looked more hideous than his hideous trophy. The bear, weary of waiting, stealthily advanced toward the mass before mentioned and soon amid the gloom was heard the grinding of teeth, mingled with faint and plaintive moans.

"Friend!" cried the man threateningly. "Ah, you wretched Friend! come here, I tell you!"

And picking up a large stone he threw it at the monster's head, who, though stunned by the blow, rose up reluctantly from the feast, smacking his lips, and ambled toward his master's feet. With a pleading expression he raised his head mutely asking pardon for his indiscretion.

Then both monsters could now be heard—for the denizen of the ruin of Arbar had well earned the title. The man's voice denoted power and anger; the bear's growl submission and pleading.

"Hold!" said the man, pointing with his crooked fingers towards the wolf, "there is your prey, leave me mine."

The bear, after having sniffed the body of the wolf, shook his head with a dissatisfied air and turned towards the man who seemed to be his master.

"I understand you. Dead prey is not to your liking; you prefer the other, as it still has life. You are refined in your tastes! Friend, like man, you seek the living in order to destroy them. You delight in causing suffering; there we have a fellow feeling, for I am not a man, Friend. I am above that depraved race—I am a savage beast like yourself. Companion Friend, I wish you could speak, just to say if your bearish feelings equal my delight at devouring a man. Yet I would rather not hear you, for the sound might remind me of the human voice. Growl at my feet! The roar which terrifies the mountain deer to me is a friendly voice, for it forewarns me that an enemy is nigh. Friend, raise up your head; lick my hand with the tongue that has so often partaken of human blood! Your teeth are white like mine—no fault of yours, for we have done our best to change them red; but it seems that blood cleanses blood. I have often noticed young girls of Kole or Oëlmœ bathing their feet in

the torrents and singing sweetly the while. In preference to their melodious voices and satin-like faces, I delight in your shaggy muzzle and hoarse cries ; they strike terror to a man."

While thus musing, he allowed the monster to caress his hand, and show him all the affection a spaniel displays towards his mistress.

What was still more strange was the rapt attention with which the animal listened to his master's words, more particularly to odd monosyllables, which he at once acknowledged by some curious sound.

"Men say I shun them," continued the little man. "Why, they shun me ! They from fear, and I from hatred. Yet, Friend, you know I am glad to meet a man when I feel hungry or thirsty."

Suddenly a red light appeared, increasing gradually and giving a faint color to the old damp walls of the gallery.

"Why, here comes one now ! Well, speak of hell and the devil shows his horns. Hello ! Friend," added he, turning toward the bear ; "hello, get up ! Come, Friend ! I must reward your obedience by satisfying your appetite."

Turning with his hatchet to the mass on the ground, he soon crunched through the bones ;

but the sound this time was not blended with either sighs or groans.

"So it seems there are but two living creatures here now," muttered the man.
"There, Friend, my Friend, enjoy your feast."

The animal rose immediately.

He threw aside the portion detached from the object at his feet. The bear seized his prey so eagerly, that the most sharp-sighted could hardly have seen if the morsel were a human arm, covered with green, such as the uniform worn by Munckholm musketeers.

"See! some one approaches!" His gaze fixed on the light as it gradually increased.
"Friend, I must be alone."

The monster obeyed; taking with him his disgusting prey, he retreated through the door and down the steps, with a howl of satisfaction.

At the same time a man of medium height came forward, bearing a long brown cloak, and carrying a dark lantern, with the bull's-eye turned full on the little man.

He, still seated on the stone, with his arms crossed, cried out:

"You are unwelcome!—you who come here led by an idea, and not from instinct."

The stranger made no reply, but looked at him attentively.

"Stare on," said he, raising his head.
"Why, in an hour's time you won't have
enough voice left even to boast you have seen
me."

The new-comer continued casting the light
on the little man, evidently more surprised
than alarmed.

"Well, what astonishes you?" said he, with
a hoarse laugh. "I have arms and legs as
well as you, only mine will never be food for
wild cats and crows."

"Listen," said the stranger, sinking his
voice, as though assured and as though he
only feared being overheard.

"Listen, I am not come as an enemy, but
as a friend."

The other interrupted him.

"Why then have you not laid aside your
human form?"

"I wish to serve you, if you are he whom
I search."

"That means, you want me to serve you.
Man, you are wasting time. I am only of use
to those who are weary of life."

"Your speech denotes the man I am seek-
ing," replied the stranger, "but your height
—Han of Iceland is a giant; you cannot there-
fore be he."

"This is the first time any one has doubted
it to my face."

"What! then you are the person," added the stranger, approaching; "but Han of Iceland is of colossal stature."

"Add my height to my fame, and you will see me taller than Hecla."

"Indeed! answer me, I pray you, are you really Han, native of Klipstadur, in Iceland?"

"It is not with words that I will answer that question," retorted the little man. Rising, he accompanied the remark with such a look that the stranger drew back.

"Confine yourself, I pray, to looks only," he answered in an almost suppliant voice, and with a glance toward the end of the gallery, as though regretting his rash venture. "Your interests alone bring me here."

At first, on arrival, the new-comer had been able to retain his coolness, but now, when the host of Arbar stood before him, with tiger-like expression and blood-stained appearance, his immense hands armed with huge nails, the stranger shuddered in the same way a traveler would do on being bitten by a viper, when he thought to handle an eel.

"My interests!" replied the monster. "Have you come to inform me that a spring is to be poisoned, or a village burnt down, or a Munckholm musketeer to be strangled?"

"Perhaps, listen. The Norway miners are in a revolt. You know what disasters a revolt entails."

"Yes. Murder! violence! sacrilege! fire! pillage!"

"I offer you all that."

The little man began to laugh.

"I have no need of offers of what I can take myself."

The hoarse laugh which followed these words made the stranger tremble. He continued, however:

"In the name of the miners I offer you the command of the insurrection."

The little man was silent for a moment, then, with an expression of deep malice, he said:

"Is it really in their name that you make the offer?"

This question somewhat disconcerted the new-comer, but feeling secure in his unknown identity, he soon recovered himself.

"Why are the miners in revolt?" he was asked.

"To free themselves from the royal tax."

"Only for that?" retorted the other in the same mock tone.

"They wish also to set the prisoner at Munckholm at liberty."

"Is this the sole reason for the movement?" answered he, in such a tone as to disconcert the stranger.

"I know of no other," stammered the latter.

"Ah! so you know of no other?"

These words were pronounced in the same ironical tone. To put an end to these embarrassing remarks the stranger drew forth a heavy purse, which he threw at the monster's feet, saying:

"There is your pay as commander."

The little man kicked away the purse.

"I won't have it. Do you think I should wait for your permission to take either your blood or your gold?"

The stranger made a gesture of surprise and fear.

"The royal miners sent me with that as a present to you."

"I don't want it, I tell you; gold is of no use to me. Men sell their souls, but they will not sell their lives; we are therefore compelled to take them."

"I can then tell the miners that the formidable Han of Iceland agrees to accept the command?"

"I do not accept it."

This answer, said shortly, made a disagreeable impression on the pretended envoy of the miners.

"What?" said he.

"No!" repeated the other.

"You refuse to take part in an expedition which promises so many advantages to you?"

"I can plunder farms and hamlets, massacre peasants or soldiers, alone."

"Yes, but in joining the miners you are assured of impunity."

"And is it also in the name of the miners that you promise impunity?" asked the other, laughing.

"I will not disguise from you," replied the stranger, mysteriously, "that it is in the name of a powerful personage who is interested in the rebellion."

"And this mighty person himself, is he quite sure he will not be hanged?"

"If you knew to whom I allude, your doubts would cease."

"Ah; well, then, who is it?"

"That I cannot tell you."

The little man advanced, and striking the stranger on the shoulder, exclaimed, with the same ironical laugh:

"Shall I tell you the name?"

The stranger in the cloak drew back, both from fear and disgust, as he was as little prepared for the direct question as the savage familiarity of the monster.

"There, I am having a game with you," continued the latter. "I know that this mighty person is the Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway, and that the grand chancellor is yourself."

This was indeed the case. When he reached the ruin of Arbar, towards which we left him journeying with Musdœmon, he had wished to try and seduce the brigand himself, to whom he was far from suspecting himself known. Count d'Ahlefeld was never, in spite of all his finesse and power, able to discover by what means Han of Iceland was so well informed. Was it by Musdœmon's treachery? It was Musdœmon, it is true, who had suggested the idea of his going in person to the brigand; but what benefit would his perfidy be to him? Had the brigand secured from one of his victims some papers relative to the grand chancellor's projects? But Frederick d'Ahlefeld, with Musdœmon, was the sole living being who knew of his father's plans, and, frivolous as he was, he was not so foolish as to reveal such a secret. Besides, he was with the garrison at Munckholm, at least so the grand chancellor thought. Those who read the balance of this chapter will see, without being any better informed than Count d'Ahlefeld, what grounds of probability there was in this last hypothesis.

One of Count d'Ahlefeld's strongest qualities was his presence of mind. When he heard himself so fiercely named by the little man, he could make no response except a cry of surprise; but in a twinkling of an eye his pale and haughty features changed from an expression of fear and astonishment to one of calm assurance.

"Yes, I wish to be frank with you. I am the chancellor. Now be equally frank with me."

A burst of laughter from the other interrupted him.

"Did I require much begging, either to tell you my name or your own?"

"Tell me as frankly how you knew who I was?"

"Have you heard that Han of Iceland can see through mountains?"

The count still persisted.

"In me you have a friend."

"Give me your hand, Count d'Ahlefeld," said the little man roughly. Then looking the minister in the face, he cried: "If our two souls were to take flight at this moment, satan would be puzzled as to which of us is the monster."

The haughty noble bit his lips; but, placed between his fears of the brigand and the necessity of making him his tool, he showed no signs of displeasure.

"Don't play with your own interests ; accept the command of the insurgents, and trust to my gratitude."

"Chancellor of Norway, you reckon on the success of your enterprise as an old woman does on the dress she is about weaving from stolen flax, little dreaming the cat has entangled the thread in its claws."

"Once more, reflect before you reject my offer."

"Once more I—the brigand—I tell you, grand chancellor of two kingdoms, No."

"I expected another answer, judging from the great service you have already rendered me."

"What service ?" asked the brigand.

"Did you not murder Captain Dispolsen ?" answered the chancellor.

"That may be, Count d'Ahlefeld ; I do not know him. Who is the man to whom you are alluding ?"

"What ! do you mean to say that the iron casket in his charge has not fallen into your hands ?"

This question evidently recalled something to the brigand's mind.

"I certainly do remember seeing this man and his iron casket. It was at the Sands of Urchta."

"If you could let me have that casket, my gratitude shall know no bounds. Tell me.

What has become of it? For it is still in your power."

The noble minister insisted so urgently in his demand that the brigand seemed astonished.

"This iron box is then of the highest importance to your grace, Chancellor of Norway?"

"Yes."

"What will be my reward if I tell you where to find it?"

"All that you can desire, my dear Han of Iceland."

"Well, then, I won't tell you."

"Come, you are joking. Only think of the service you will render me."

"That is precisely what I am considering."

"You shall have an immense fortune, and I will ask the king for your pardon."

"Ask rather for your own," said the brigand. "Now listen, Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway. Tigers do not attack hyenas, so you shall leave here alive, for you are a villain, whose sole thought in life is to plan for man's misery, thus adding fresh crime to yourself. Go, but never attempt to return, for my hatred spares no one, not even criminals. Now don't flatter yourself I killed the captain on your account; why, his uniform condemned him. Nor was it to render you

a service that I killed this other wretch, I assure you."

Thus speaking, he drew the count by the arm toward the body lying in the shadow. The light from the dark lantern fell full on the object. It was the mangled corpse of a man clothed in the uniform of an officer of the Munckholm musketeers. The chancellor shudderingly advanced, and beheld a blood-stained face, with its parted lips all blue, the eyes upturned, from which all light had fled. The count gave a piercing cry.

"Heaven! Frederick! my son!"

There is no doubt that in the most hardened sinner there is some hidden feeling, lost even to themselves amid a life of passion and vice—a mysterious witness proving a future avenger. It bides its time, remaining in the heart until the day it shows that crime shall know what anguish means. No ordinary misfortune can affect the wicked and selfish. Let some deep grief unexpectedly arise, then it eats into their very soul, and the affection, quite unknown even to themselves, will assert itself in all its depths and pain, stronger from its previous state of insensibility; but the sting of sorrow must probe the heart deeply. Nature has its rights, and the wretched creature in one short moment experiences all the agony which he has scoffed at for years. Tortured by

conflicting emotions, in his despair he sees but hell in itself.

Without knowing it Count d'Ahlefeld loved his son. We say his son, because he was ignorant of the adultery of his wife. Frederick, direct heir to his name, had this title in his eyes. Believing him to be at Munckholm, he little thought to find him in the ruins of Arbar, there lying dead before his eyes, bathed in blood. The love for his son rose in full force with the certainty that he was lost beyond recall. Overcome by the fearful shock, he wrung his hands in anguish, crying:

“My son ! my son !”

The brigand laughed ; it was a horrible thing to hear the sound of laughter, mingled with the father's moans over the dead body of his son.

“By my ancestor, Ingulphus, you may cry out, Count d'Ahlefeld ; you will never awake him.”

Suddenly his fearful countenance changed, and he added, solemnly :

“Cry over your son ; I have avenged mine.”

He was interrupted by sounds of footsteps in the gallery. Four men, with drawn swords, rushed forward, followed by a short man in a brown cloak like the chancellor's, bearing a torch in one hand and a sword in the other.

"My lord!" cried he, "we heard your cry, and hastened to the rescue."

The reader has doubtless recognized Musdœmon and the four armed servants who composed the count's suite.

The new-comers, by the light from the torch, beheld with horror the frightful spectacle. On one side lay the remains of the wolf, wet with gore, and on the other the disfigured corpse of the young officer. In the midst the father with haggard face crying in his despair, and near to him the dreadful brigand's hideous countenance boldly confronting them.

On seeing this unexpected reinforcement, the idea of vengeance occurred to the count, and his despair turned to rage.

"Death to this brigand!" cried he, drawing his sword. "He has murdered my son! Death! death!"

"He has murdered Lord Frederick!" said Musdœmon, and the torch which he carried showed not the least change in his features.

"Death! death!" repeated the count furiously.

And the six men rushed on to the brigand, who, surprised at the sudden attack, retreated to the precipice, giving a wild roar, far more of rage than fear.

Six swords were against him, but his fierce glance was more menacing than that of any two of his assailants. Compelled to keep on the defensive, he wielded his stone hatchet with such rapidity that it formed a complete buckler, against which the swords were vain. Weakened by his late encounter with the wolf, he was losing ground, and he soon found himself on the brink of the abyss.

"Courage, my friends!" cried the count; "let us dash the monster over the precipice."

"Before I fall, the planets will fall," replied the brigand.

On seeing the little man take a step backward down the stone flight, his adversaries followed with renewed ardor.

"Good, press forward!" urged the chancellor. "He must fall; one more effort. Ah! wretch, you have committed your last crime! courage, my friends!"

The brigand still protected himself with the hatchet in his right hand, while with the other he raised the horn from his belt, and blew several prolonged blasts. The answering call at once came—a loud roar was soon heard proceeding from the abyss.

Just as the count and his followers were flattering themselves upon their success in having made the little man take another step

downward, the enormous head of a white bear appeared behind him. The assailants drew back in surprise and fear.

The bear mounted the steps and confronted the foes with his open blood-stained mouth.

"Thanks, my brave Friend," exclaimed the brigand.

And, profiting by his adversaries' discomfiture he vaulted on to the bear's back. The animal descended with his threatening face turned towards his master's enemies.

Soon, recovered from their surprise they could see the bear effecting his escape with his burden; by grasping trunks of trees and projecting rocks, they endeavored to raise a block of granite, but before they could hurl it, the brigand and his strange beast had vanished into a cavern.

XXVI.

No, no, laugh no more. Look you, what seems so pleasant also has its serious side, a very serious one, and so in everything. Believe me, this word chance is blasphemy; nothing under the sun happens by chance; and so in this you see the end providence has in view.

LESSING—*Emilia Galotti*.

Yes, most profound reasoning is often shown in what men call chance. In these events, what seems a mysterious hand shapes, in a way, their course and object. One may rail against the caprices of fortune, or the strangeness of things, and suddenly out of chaos there comes astounding light, or some bright rays; and human knowledge bows before the high lessons of destiny.

If, for example, when Frederick d'Ahlefeld, in a sumptuous salon at Copenhagen, displayed, before the eyes of the ladies, the magnificence of his apparel, the foppishness of his rank and the presumption of his speech, some man, warned about future events, came and troubled

the frivolity of his thoughts by grave prophecies; if he had told him that some day his brilliant uniform, which was his pride, would be the cause of his death; that a monster with a human face would drink his blood as he, careless voluptuary, drank the wines of France and Bohemia; that his hair, for which he had not enough essences and perfumes, would sweep the dust in a cave of wild beasts; that his arm, which he offered with so much grace as support to the beautiful ladies of Charlottenburg, would be thrown like a half-picked roebuck bone, to a bear; how would Frederick have replied to these dismal prophesies? By a burst of laughter and a jest; and, what would have been more dreadful, all human reasoning would have agreed with the madman.

Let us examine this destiny still further. Is it not a strange mystery to see the crime of the count and countess of d'Ahlefeld return to them as a punishment? They had hatched a plot against the daughter of a captive; this unfortunate girl had by chance a protector who considered it necessary to send away their son, entrusted by them to execute this abominable design. This son, their only hope, was sent far from the scene of his seduction; and, no sooner had he arrived at his new station than another chance avenger killed him.

Thus, hoping to lead a young innocent girl whom they hated into dishonor, drove their cherished yet guilty son into his tomb. It was by their fault that these wretched beings became miserable.

XXVII.

Ah ! Here is our beautiful countess !—Pardon, madame, if I am unable to-day to take advantage of your visit. I am very busy. Another time, dear countess, another time ; but, to-day, I will not keep you long.

Le Prince & Orsina.

The day after his visit to Munckholm the Governor of Drontheim called early for his traveling carriage, hoping to leave before the Countess d'Ahlefeld was up, but, as we have already said, the sleep of the countess was broken.

The general had just signed the last instructions for the bishop, who was to replace him as governor in the *interim*. He arose, put on his fur redingote, and was on the point of starting, when the noble lady was announced.

This annoyance disconcerted the old soldier, accustomed to laugh at the fire of a hundred cannon, but who could not stand a woman's artifices. He made his adieu, hoping to escape further questioning. The wicked countess leaned forward with an artful expression of

countenance, meaning to impress him as purely confidential.

"Well, noble general, what did he say to you?"

"Who?—Poël? He said the carriage was ready."

"I am speaking of the Munckholm prisoner, general."

"Ah!"

"Did he reply in a satisfactory manner?"

"But—yes—really, my lady countess," said the general, whom we may be assured was now embarrassed.

"Have you any proof of his complicity with the miners?"

An exclamation escaped from Levin.

"Noble lady, he is innocent!"

He suddenly stopped, for he had just spoken according to his heart's dictates, and not according to his judgment.

"He is innocent!" repeated the countess, in consternation, though still incredulous. She feared Schumacker had satisfied the general, and his guilt proven was all important to the interest of the grand chancellor.

The governor had had time to reflect, and his hesitating reply was reassuring to the countess.

"Innocent—yes—if you wish."

"If I wish, my lord general!"

And the wicked woman burst into laughter.

This laughter wounded the governor.

"Noble countess," said he, "with all due deference, I must tell you that the details of my interview with the ex-grand chancellor are for the viceroy's ears alone."

With a profound bow he retired, and descended into the court where his carriage was waiting.

"Yes, go," repeated the countess to herself, once within her own apartment, "you knight-errant, the protector of our enemies. May your departure be the signal of my Frederick's return. Fancy sending the handsomest cavalier in Copenhagen to those horrible mountains! Happily there will be no difficulty now in having him recalled."

At this thought she addressed her favorite attendant :

"My dear Lisbeth, order from Berghen a couple of dozen small combs now worn by beaux in the hair, and the famous Scudéry's newest novel. My dear Frederick's monkey must have a rose-water bath every morning."

"What! my gracious mistress," asked Lisbeth, "can my Lord Frederick then return?"

"Yes, indeed. I must fulfil his wishes; he will then be pleased to see me. Besides, I want to surprise him."

Poor mother!

201 (601) A.Y.S.



Ch. COURTOIS sc.

1860



XXVIII.

Bernard followed the banks of the Arlança.
He seemed like a lion which had left its lair,
seeking the huntsmen and determined to con-
quer or die.

So he has gone, this valiant and determined
Spaniard?

With a rapid step, a great spear in hand, in
which he placed great hopes, Bernard explored
the ruins of Arlança.

Spanish Romance.

Ordener, wearied with seeking his poor
guide, Benignus Spiagudry, left the tower
whence he had perceived Munckholm beacon.
The ruins but echoed his calls. Surprised,
but in no way alarmed, at the man's disap-
pearance, attributing it to fright he therefore
blamed himself for leaving him, and decided
to pass the night on the rocks of Oëlmœ, to
give his guide the time to return. After some
slight refreshment, he wrapped his cloak
around him, and lay down near the few re-
maining embers. Pressing Ethel's hair to his
lips, he soon fell asleep. Even amid great
anxiety sleep comes to a clear conscience.

At sunrise Ordener resumed his search, but he only found Spiagudry's cloak and wallet in the tower, showing evidently marks of a hasty retreat. Despairing to find him on the rock, he left, in order to keep his appointment with Han of Iceland at Walderhog on the morrow.

In the early chapters we have learned that Ordener was accustomed to a wandering and adventurous life, and as he was well acquainted with Northern Norway, he wanted no guide to the brigand's retreat. He went forth on his solitary journey, with no Benignus Spiagudry to give him information concerning the quartz in the mountains, or the various traditions of the country.

He traveled for a whole day across the mountains, which running from north to south of Norway down to the sea, give to the coast a succession of promontories and gulfs. Inland mountains and valleys follow one upon another to such an extent that Norway is compared to the backbone of a fish.

It was no easy thing to travel in that country. Sometimes it was necessary to follow the stony bed of a dried-up torrent, sometimes to cross on a shaky bridge made of a trunk of a tree when the roads themselves had been chosen as beds by the raging torrents.

However, Ordener traveled for hours without seeing any evidences of the presence of

man, beyond occasionally seeing the sails of a wind-mill on the top of a hill, or hearing the noise of a distant forge, from which the smoke rose and hung in the air like a black canopy.

Here and there he met a peasant mounted on a little gray horse, head down, and only a little less savage than its master, or fur merchant seated in his sled drawn by two reindeers, behind which was attached a long rope, with many knots, which, bounding over the stones of the road, was intended to frighten the wolves.

When Ordener asked the merchant the road to the cavern of Walderhog : "Keep to the northeast you will find the village of Hervalyn, cross the ravine of Dodlysax, and to-night you may reach Surb, which is only two miles from Walderhog." Thus carelessly replied the roving merchant, knowing only the names and positions of the places which his business compelled him to explore.

If Ordener addressed the same question to a peasant, he, steeped in the traditions and fireside tales of the country, would shake his head repeatedly and stop his gray nag saying : "Walderhog ! the cavern of Walderhog ! There even stones sing and bones dance, and the demon of Iceland lives there. Is it really to the cavern of Walderhog that your courtesy wishes to go ?"

"Yes, certainly," answered Ordener.

"Then your courtesy must have lost your mother, or your farm has burnt down, or your neighbor has stolen your fat pig?"

"No, really," replied the young man.

"Then your courtesy has been bewitched?"

"My good man, I ask the way to Walder-hog."

"I am giving you the answer, my lord. Farewell, then. Keep to the north. I know well enough how you can get there, but I am very doubtful how you will return."

And the peasant drove away, making the sign of the cross.

The dismal monotony and the difficulties of the road were increased by a fine penetrating rain which began about the middle of the day. No birds dared to breast the wind, and Ordener, frozen in spite of his cloak, saw above his head only a goshawk, gerfalcon or king-fisher, which, alarmed at the noise of his approach, rose suddenly from the reeds of a pond with a fish in its claws.

It was night, when the young traveler, after having traversed the forest of aspen and beech trees close to the ravine of Dodlysax, arrived at the hamlet of Surb in which Spiagudry, as the reader may remember, wished to make his headquarters. From the smell of tar and charcoal smoke Ordener knew that he was

approaching a settlement of fishermen. He advanced towards the first hut which he could distinguish in the dusk. The low narrow entrance was closed, according to the Norwegian custom, by a large transparent fish skin, reddened by the light of a fire.

He knocked on the wood frame of the door, crying:

“It is a traveler.”

“Come in, come in,” was the reply from within.

At the same moment an officious hand raised the fish skin, and Ordener entered the conical habitations used by the fishermen of the Norwegian coast. It was a sort of round tent of wood and earth, in the middle of which burned a fire in which the purple flame of heat mingled with the white light of the fir tree. Near the fire the fisherman, his wife and two children, dressed in rags, were seated before a table covered with wooden plates and earthen vessels. On the opposite side, among the nets and oars, were two reindeers sleeping on a bed of leaves and skins, a continuation of which seemed intended to receive the hosts of the house and any guests Heaven might be pleased to send them. One could not all at once distinguish this interior arrangement of the hut for heavy stinging smoke, which with difficulty escaped through

an opening in the top of the cone, wrapped all objects in a thick moving cloud.

Ordener had hardly crossed the threshold, when the fisherman and his wife rose and saluted him with an air of kindness and welcome. Norwegian peasants like travelers, as much perhaps from the feeling of curiosity, so strong in them, as from their natural love of hospitality.

"My lord," said the fisherman, "you must be hungry and cold, here is a fire to dry your cloak and excellent rye bread to appease your appetite. Your courtesy may afterwards deign to tell us who you are, whence you come, where you are going, and what sort of tales the old women tell in your country."

"Yes, my lord," added the woman, "and you may add to this excellent rye bread, as my lord and husband says, a piece of delicious salt stock-fish, seasoned with whale-oil. Sit down, my lord stranger."

"And if your courtesy does not like the cheer of Saint Usulph,"¹⁹ continued the man, "if he will have patience for a minute, I promise him he will eat a quarter of venison or at the least a wing of a royal pheasant. We will await the return of the finest hunter there is in the three provinces. Is it not true, my good Maase?"

Maase, the name which the fisherman gave to his wife, is a Norwegian word which means sea-gull. The woman did not seem annoyed, either because it was her real name or a nickname of tenderness.

"The best hunter! I think so, certainly," she responded with emphasis. "He is my brother, the famous Kennybol! May God favor his chase! He has come to spend several days with us, and you may be able, my lord stranger, to drink with him several draughts of good beer from the same cup. He is a traveler like you."

"Many thanks, my kind hostess," said Ordener smiling; "but I will be forced to content myself with your appetizing stock-fish and a piece of rye bread. I will not have the leisure to await your brother, the famous hunter. I must depart immediately."

The good Maase, at the same time annoyed at the prompt departure of the stranger, and flattered by the praises of her stock-fish and her brother, cried :

"You are very good, my lord. But why are you going to leave us so soon?"

"I must."

"You are going to venture in the mountains at this hour and in such weather?"

"It is on important business."

These replies of the young man aroused the native curiosity of his hosts as much as it excited their astonishment.

The fisherman rose and said :

“ You are in the house of Christopher Buldus Braall, fisherman, of the hamlet of Surb.”

The woman added :

“ Maase Kennybol is his wife and servant.”

When Norwegian peasants wish to politely ask a stranger his name, their custom is to tell him theirs.

Ordener answered :

“ And I, I am a traveler who is neither sure of the name he bears, nor the road which he follows.”

This singular response seemed not to satisfy fisherman Braall.

“ By the crown of Gorman the Old,” said he, “ I thought that in Norway there was only one man who was not sure of his name. That man is the noble Baron of Thorwick, who will soon be called, they tell me, Count of Danneskiold, on account of his glorious marriage with the daughter of the chancellor. That at least, my good Maase, is the latest news which I have heard from Drontheim. I congratulate you, my lord stranger, on this similarity to the son of the viceroy, the great Count Guldenlew.”

“ Since your courtesy,” added the woman, whose face was flushed with curiosity, “ seems

unable to tell us anything about himself, perhaps he can give us some news of what is going on just now; for instance, about this famous marriage of which my lord and husband has just received news?"

"Yes," continued the other with an important air, "is there anything later? Before a month, the son of the viceroy will marry the daughter of the grand chancellor."

"I doubt it," said Ordener.

"You doubt it, my lord! I myself can assure you that the thing is certain. I have it from a good source. He who told me had it from my Lord Poël, the favorite valet of the noble Baron of Thorwick, that is to say the noble Count of Danneskiold. Has any storm troubled the waters within a week? Will this great union be broken?"

"I believe so," answered the young man smiling.

"If it is so, my lord, I was wrong. No need to light the fire to fry the fish before the net has caught it. But is this rupture certain? From whom did you learn the news?"

"From no one," said Ordener, "I myself arranged all that in my head."

At these naïve words the fisherman could not forbear violating Norwegian courtesy by a long burst of laughter.

"A thousand pardons, my lord. But it is easily seen that you are indeed a traveler, and without doubt a stranger. Do you really believe that events follow your caprices, and that the weather will cloud over or clear according to your wish?"

Here, the fisherman, learned in national affairs, like all Norwegian peasants, began to explain to Ordener reasons why this marriage must occur, it was necessary for the interests of the d'Ahlefeld family; the viceroy could not refuse the king, who desired it, and besides it was said that genuine passion united the future bride and groom. In short, fisherman Braall no more doubted that this alliance would take place than that he, next day, would kill the cursed sea-dog which infested the pond of Master-Bick.

Ordener felt little disposed to maintain a political conversation with such a rude statesman, when the arrival of a new personage allowed him to escape the annoyance.

"'Tis he, it is my brother!" cried old Maase. And it needed nothing less than the arrival of a brother to disturb the contemplative admiration with which she listened to the lengthy discourse of her husband. The latter, whilst the children threw themselves noisily on their uncle's neck, gravely held out his hand.

"Make yourself welcome, my brother."

Then, turning towards Ordener :

" My lord, this is our brother, the renowned hunter Kennybol, of the Kole Mountains."

" I salute you heartily," said the mountaineer, doffing his bearskin cap. " Brother, I have as bad hunting on your shores, as you no doubt would have bad fishing in our mountains. I believe I would sooner fill my shooting-pouch hunting elves and goblins in the hazy mountains of Queen Mab. Sister Maase, you are the first sea-gull to which I have been able to say good-day up to now. Hold, friends, may God keep you in peace ! It was for this miserable woodcock that the best hunter in the Drontheimhus has scoured the glades all this time and in this weather."

Thus speaking, he drew a white wood-hen from his game bag and threw it on the table, vowing that this thin beast was not worthy of a musket-shot. " But," added he under his breath, " faithful musket of Kennybol, you will soon hunt bigger game. If you no longer have chamois or antelope to slaughter, you will have green jackets and red (justaucorps) to pierce."

These half-heard words excited Maase's curiosity.

" Eh !" asked she, " what did you say then, my good brother ? "

" I said there was always a goblin dancing on women's tongues."

"You are right, brother Kennybol," cried the fisherman. "These daughters of Eve are all as curious as their mothers. Did you not speak of green jackets?"

"Brother Braall," replied the hunter in a tone of ill-humor, "I only confide my secrets to my musket, because I am sure it will not repeat them."

"They talk in the village of a revolt of the miners," intrepidly continued the fisherman. "Brother, do you know anything about it?"

The mountaineer put on his cap and drawing it down over his eyes threw a sidelong glance at the stranger; then he bent towards the fisherman, and said in a curt deep voice:

"Silence!"

The other shook his head several times.

"Brother Kennybol, the fish is silent in vain, for he none the less falls into the bow-net."

Then there was a moment of silence. The brothers watched each other with an expressive air; the children plucked the feathers from the wood-hen on the table; the good wife heard that no one was speaking; and Ordener looked on.

"If you have poor cheer to-day," said the hunter suddenly, openly seeking to change the conversation, "it will not be so bad to-morrow. Brother Braall, you may fish for the

king of fishes, I promise you bear's grease to season it."

"Bear's grease!" cried Maase. "Have you seen a bear hereabouts? Patrick, Regner, my children, I forbid you to go out of the cabin. A bear!"

"Calm yourself, sister, you need have no fear of it to-morrow. Yes, it was indeed a bear that I saw about two miles from Surb; a white bear. It seemed to be carrying a man, or an animal rather. But no, it could not have been a goatherd that he was carrying off, for goatherds clothe themselves in animal skins. However, distance did not permit me to distinguish. What astonished me was that he carried his prey on his back and not between his teeth."

"Truly, brother?"

"Yes, and the animal must have been dead for it made no movement to defend itself."

"But," shrewdly asked the fisherman, "if it was dead, how did it keep itself on the bear's back?"

"That is just what I have not been able to understand. However, it will have made the bear's last meal. Passing through the village I just notified six good companions; and tomorrow, sister Maase, I will bring to you the finest white fur I have ever seen roam on the snows of a mountain."

"Take care, brother," said the woman, "you have indeed seen a remarkable thing. This bear is perhaps the devil."

"Are you crazy?" laughingly interrupted the mountaineer; "the devil change himself into a bear! Into a cat or a monkey, well enough, that has been seen, but into a bear! Ah! By Saint Eldon the Exorciser, you would move the pity of a child or an old woman with your superstitions!"

The poor woman hung her head.

"Brother, you were my lord before my revered husband cast eyes on me, act as your guardian angel inspires you to act."

"But," the fisherman asked the mountaineer, "in what direction did you meet this bear?"

"On the road from Smiasen to Walderhog."

"Walderhog!" said the woman, making the sign of the cross.

"Walderhog!" repeated Ordener.

"But, my brother," continued the fisherman, "it is not thou, I hope, who went towards this grotto of Walderhog?"

"Me! God forbid! It was the bear."

"Will you go to seek it there to-morrow?" interrupted Maase in terror.

"No, indeed; do you believe, my friends, that even a bear would choose as a retreat a cavern where . . . ?"

He stopped, and all three made the sign of the cross.

"You are right," answered the fisherman, "there is an instant which keeps beasts from such things as that."

"My good hosts," said Ordener, "what is there so frightful about this grotto of Walderhog?"

They all three regarded him with stupid astonishment, as though they could not understand such a question.

"Is it there that the tomb of King Walder is?" added the young man.

"Yes," answered the woman, "a tomb of stone that sings."

"There is no doubt about it," said the fisherman.

"No," continued she, "and at night one can hear the bones of trespassers dancing."

All were silent, as though they did not dare to go on.

"Well," asked Ordener, "is there anything else supernatural?"

"Young man," said the mountaineer, gravely, "there is no need to speak so lightly when you see such an old gray wolf as I am older."

The young man answered with a gentle smile:

"I would like very much to know all the marvelous things which happen in this grotto of Walderhog ; I am just on my way there."

These words petrified his three hearers with terror.

"To Walderhog ! Heavens ! You are going to Walderhog ?"

"He said it," answered the fisherman, "as one says : I am going to Lœvig to sell my cod-fish ! or to Ralph's clearing to fish for herring ! To Walderhog, great God !"

"Unhappy young man !" cried the woman, "you must have been born without a guardian angel. Is no saint in heaven your patron ? Alas ! It is too true since you do not even know your own name."

"And what object," interrupted the mountaineer, "can it be that leads your courtesy to this frightful place ?"

"I have something to ask of some one," answered Ordener.

The astonishment of the three hosts redoubled with their curiosity.

"Listen, my lord stranger ; you appear not to know this country very well ; your courtesy is no doubt mistaken, it cannot be that you wish to go to Walderhog. Besides," added the mountaineer, "if he wishes to speak to some human being, he will not find any one."

"Except the demon," continued the woman.

"The demon! What demon?"

"Yes," continued she, "he for whom the tomb sings and the departed dance."

"Then you do not know, my lord," said the fisherman, lowering his voice and approaching Ordener, "you do not know that the grotto of Walderhog is usually the abode of . . ."

The woman stopped him.

"My lord and husband, do not pronounce that name, it brings ill-luck."

"The abode of who?" asked Ordener.

"Of a Beelzebub incarnate," said Kennybol.

"Truly, my kind hosts, I do not know what you mean. I was told that Walderhog was inhabited by Han of Iceland."

A triple cry of horror rose in the cottage.

"Well! You knew it! He is the demon!"

The woman bowed her drugget head-dress, vowing by all the saints that it was not she who had pronounced the name.

When the fisherman had recovered a little from his stupefaction, he stared fixedly at Ordener, as though there was something about the young man which he could not understand.

"I believe, my lord traveler, that I would have to live longer than my father, who died at the age of a hundred and twenty, before I would ever see a human being, endowed with reason and God-fearing, who would show you the road to Walderhog."

"No doubt," cried Maase; "but his courtesy will not go to this cursed grotto; for, in order to enter, a pact must be made with the devil!"

"I will go, my good hosts, and the greatest service you can render me will be to show me the shortest road."

"The shortest road to go where you wish to go," said the fisherman, "is to throw yourself from the top of a rock into the nearest torrent."

"Does it answer the same purpose," asked Ordener in a calm voice, "to choose a useless death rather than a useful danger?"

Braall shook his head whilst his brother fixed on the young adventurer a searching look.

"I understand," cried the fisherman suddenly, "you wish to earn the thousand royal écus which the high syndic have promised for the head of this demon of Iceland."

Ordener smiled.

"Young sir," continued the fisherman with emotion, "be advised by me, renounce this project. I am poor and old, but I would not give

up what remains of my life for your thousand royal écus, even if I were only to live a day."

The beseeching and compassionate eyes of the woman watched the effect which the prayer of her husband produced on the young man. Ordener hastened to respond :

"A greater interest makes me seek this brigand whom you call a demon ; it is for others than myself . . ."

The mountaineer, who had not taken his gaze from Ordener, interrupted him.

"I understand you now, I know why you seek this Iceland demon."

"I wish to force him to fight," said the young man.

"That is it," said Kennybol, "you are entrusted with great matters, are you not?"

"I have just told you."

The mountaineer approached the young man with a look of intelligence, and it was not without extreme astonishment that Ordener heard him whisper in his ear :

"It is for Count Schumacker of Griffenfeld, is it not?"

"My brave fellow," cried he, "how did you know?"

Indeed, it was difficult for him to imagine how a Norwegian mountaineer could come to know a secret which he had confided to no one, not even to General Levin.

Kennybol leaned towards him.

"I wish you good success," he continued in the same mysterious tone: "you are a noble young man to thus serve the oppressed."

Ordener's surprise was so great that he was hardly able to find words to ask the mountaineer how he knew the object of his journey.

"Silence," said Kennybol, placing his finger to his mouth, "I hope you will obtain what you desire from the inhabitant of Walderhog; my arm is devoted, like yours, to the prisoner of Munckholm."

Then raising his voice, before Ordener was able to reply, he said:

"Brother, and good sister Maase," continued he, "receive this respectable young man as a brother. Come, I think supper is ready."

"What!" interrupted Maase, "you have really persuaded his courtesy to renounce his intentions of visiting the demon?"

"Sister, pray that no harm comes to him. He is a noble and worthy young man. Come, brave sir, take some food and sleep with us. To-morrow I will show you your road, and we will go to hunt together, you for your devil, and I for my bear."



Ch. Country sc.



XXIX.

Countryman, eh! to what countryman were
you born? What child of man art thou to dare
to thus come to attack Fafnir?

EDDA.

The first rays of the rising sun had hardly reddened the highest peak of the rock bordering the sea, when a fisherman, who had come before dawn to cast his nets within musket shot of the shore, opposite the entrance to the grotto of Walderhog, saw something like a figure wrapped in a cloak or a shroud, descend the rocks and disappear under the formidable vault of the cavern. Struck with terror, he commanded his boat and his soul to Saint Usulph, and hastened to relate to his terror-stricken family how he had seen one of the spectres, which lived in the palace of Han of Iceland, re-enter the grotto at day-break.

This spectre, the terror and topic of conversation of future long winter evenings, was Ordener, the noble son of the viceroy of Norway, who whilst the two kingdoms

thought given up to secret attendance near his haughty betrothed, had come, alone and unknown, to risk his life for her to whom he had given his heart and future; for the daughter of an exile.

Dismal forebodings, sinister predictions, had followed him on his journey; he had just left the fisherman's family, where good Maase, after saying farewell had knelt in prayer before the threshold of her door. The mountaineer Kennybol and his six companions, who had showed him the road, had separated from him half a mile from Walderhog, and even these fearless hunters, who went laughingly to face a bear, had stood aghast for a long while watching the path which the adventurous traveler followed.

The young man entered the grotto of Walderhog as one enters a long-desired goal. He felt a heavenly joy in thinking that he was going to accomplish the object of his life, and that in a few minutes he would perhaps have given his blood for Ethel's sake. Ready to attack a brigand feared throughout an entire province, a monster, a demon perhaps, it was not this frightful figure which appeared to his imagination; he only saw the image of a sweet virgin captive, no doubt praying for him before the altar in her prison. If he thought of anything but her, it was but to

scorn the perils which he had come so far to seek; but could any other thought find a place in a young heart which at that moment beat with the double exaltation of a great devotion and a noble love?

He advanced, head erect, under the resounding vault, whose thousand echoes multiplied the noise of his footsteps, without even looking at the stalactites, or at the circular basaltis which hung above his head, amongst moss, ivy and lichens, a confused mass of odd forms, which the superstitions of the Norwegian countrymen had more than once taken for crowds of demons or processions of phantoms.

With the same indifference he passed the tomb of King Walder, to which so many dismal traditions were attached, and he heard no other voice than the whistling of the breeze through the funereal galleries.

He continued his walk through the winding arcades, feebly lighted by clefts half closed with weeds and shrubs. His feet often struck against some remains, which rolled over the rock with a hollow sound, and presented, in the shadow, to his eyes the appearance of broken skulls, or jaws with long rows of white teeth.

But he felt no terror. He was only astonished at not meeting the formidable inhabitant of this horrible grotto.

He arrived in a sort of round hall, naturally formed in the flank of the rock. There the path which he had followed ended. The walls of the room had no other openings except large cracks through which one could see the forests and mountains beyond.

Surprised at having explored the whole of the fatal cavern unmolested, he began to despair of meeting the brigand. A monument of singular shape, placed in the middle of the underground room, attracted his attention. Three long massive stones, placed upright on the ground supported a fourth, large and square, like three pillars with a roof. Under this kind of gigantic tripod was a sort of altar, likewise formed of a single piece of granite, pierced with a circular hole in the middle of its upper face. Ordener recognized one of those colossal Druidical structures which he had often noticed in his travels in Norway, the most astonishing examples of which, in France, are perhaps those of Cokmariaker and of Carnac. Strange buildings which one may see, placed on the earth like tents set up for a day, whose weight alone gives them solidity.

The young man, given up to his reveries, sat down mechanically on this altar, which was browned as though it had drank deeply of the blood of human victims.

Suddenly he was startled by a voice, which seemed to come out of the stone.

"Young man, your feet touched your tomb when you came here."

He arose suddenly, and grasped his sabre, whilst an echo, feeble as the voice of the dead, distinctly repeated in the depths of the grotto :

"Young man, your feet touched your tomb when you came here."

At this moment a horrid head, with red hair, rose at the other side of the altar, laughing atrociously.

"Young man," it repeated, "yes, when you came here your feet touched your tomb."

And the young man answered coolly by placing his hand on his sword.

The monster came from behind the Druidical altar and showed his thick-set sinewy limbs, his savage and bloody clothes, his hooked hands and his heavy stone hatchet.

"It is I," said he with a growl like a wild beast.

"It is I," answered Ordener.

"I await thee."

"I do more," fearlessly replied the young man, "I seek thee."

The brigand crossed his arms.

"Dost thou know who I am?"

"Yes."

"And thou hast no fear?"

"I have no longer."

"Then thou hadst fear in coming here?"

And the monster tossed his head triumphantly.

"That of not meeting thee."

"Thou darest me, and yet thou hast just stumbled over human corpses!"

"To-morrow, perhaps they will jostle against thine."

A fit of anger seized the little man. Ordener, unmoved, retained his calm bold attitude.

"Take care!" murmured the brigand; "I will fall upon thee, as the Norway hail upon a parasol."

"I would ask no other shield against thee."

One might say that there was something in Ordener's look which cowed the monster. He began to pluck the nap of his cloak, as a tiger claws the sod before springing on its prey.

"Thou wilt learn from me what pity is," said he.

"And from me, what scorn is."

"Boy, thy voice is gentle, thy face is smooth, like the voice and face of a young girl; what death dost thou wish from me?"

"Thine."

The little man laughed.

"Thou dost not know that I am a demon, that my spirit is the spirit of Ingulphus the Exterminator."

"I know that thou art a brigand, and that thou dost murder for gold."

"Thou art mistaken," interrupted the monster, "it is for blood."

"Hast thou not been paid by the d'Ahlefelds for assassinating Captain Dispolsen?"

"What sayest thou? What are these names?"

"Thou dost not know Captain Dispolsen, whom thou hast assassinated on the Sands of Urchta?"

"That may be, but I have forgotten it, as I will have forgotten thee in three days."

"Thou dost not know Count d'Ahlefeld, who has paid thee to take an iron casket from the captain?"

"D'Ahlefeld! Wait; yes, I know the name. Yesterday I drank the blood of his son from the skull of my own."

Ordener shuddered with horror.

"Wert thou not content with thy wage?"

"What wage?" asked the brigand.

"Listen; thou mistakest; I must finish. Didst thou, eight days ago, steal an iron casket from one of thy victims, an officer from Munckholm?"

This word startled the brigand.

"An officer from Munckholm!" he hissed between his teeth.

Then he continued, with a movement of surprise :

"Art thou also an officer from Munckholm?"

"No," said Ordener.

"So much the worse."

And the brigand's features darkened.

"Listen," said Ordener, obstinately, "where is this casket thou stolest from the captain?"

The little man seemed to think for a moment.

"By Ingulphus! How this iron box fills their heads. I warn thee that they will seek less for that which holds thy bones, if even they are placed in a coffin."

These words, showing Ordener that the brigand knew the casket about which he spoke, gave him new hopes of recovering it.

"Tell me what thou hast done with the casket. Is it in possession of Count d'Ahlefeld?"

"No."

"Thou liest, for thou laughest."

"Believe what thou wouldest. What is it to me?"

The monster had indeed assumed an air of raillery which provoked Ordener's defiance.

He saw that there was nothing to be done except to put him into a fury, or to intimidate him, if possible.

"Understand me," said he, raising his voice, "thou must give me the casket."

The other answered by a savage laugh.

"Thou must give it to me!" repeated the young man in a thundering voice.

"Art thou accustomed to give orders to buffaloes and to bears?" replied the monster with the same laugh.

"I will give them to satan in hell."

"Thou wilt do that very thing by and by."

Ordener drew his sabre, which flashed in the shadow like lightning.

"Obey!"

"Come on!" replied the other shaking his hatchet, "I was ready to break your bones and suck thy blood when thou camest, but I restrained myself, for I was curious to see how the sparrow would spring upon the vulture."

"Wretch," cried Ordener, "defend thyself!"

"It is the first time that any one said that to me," muttered the brigand, grinding his teeth.

Speaking thus, he leaped on to the granite altar and gathered himself together, like a leopard on top of a rock waiting to spring unexpectedly on the hunter.

Keeping his eyes fixed on the young man he seemed to be seeking the best means of springing upon him. Ordener's fate would have been sealed if he had wavered an instant. But he did not give the brigand time to consider, but threw himself upon him, driving the point of his sabre into his face.

Then commenced the most frightful battle imaginable. The little man, standing on the altar like a statue on its pedestal, seemed like one of the horrible idols, which, in the barbarian ages, received impious sacrifices and sacrilegious offerings.

The monster's movements were so rapid that, from whichever side Ordener attacked him, he found him facing him and swinging his hatchet. He would have been cut to pieces by the blows had he not fortunately wrapped his cloak about his left arm, in such a way that most of his enemies' blows were lost on this flowing shield. For several minutes they made useless efforts to wound each other.

The little man's flashing eyes started from their sockets. Surprised at the vigorous and audacious fight made by such a feeble looking adversary a sullen rage replaced his savage leers. The atrocious immobility of the savage's features and the calmness of Ordener's contrasted strongly with the rapidity of their movements and briskness of their attacks.





Nothing was heard but the clash of arms, the hurried steps of the young man, and the quick breathing of the combatants, when suddenly the little man gave a terrible roar. The head of his axe had just become entangled in the folds of the cloak. He shook his arm violently, but it only served to entangle the axe the more.

The formidable brigand felt the young man's sword against his breast.

"Listen to me once more," said Ordener triumphantly; "wilt thou give me back the iron coffer thee so cowardly stole?"

The little man was silent for a moment, then reddening, he said :

"No, curse thee!"

Ordener, without quitting his victorious and menacing attitude :

"Reflect!"

"No, I told thee no," repeated the brigand.

The noble young man lowered his sabre.

"Well," said he, "disengage thy hatchet from the folds of my cloak so that we can continue."

A disdainful laugh was the monster's only response.

"Boy, thou art generous, as though I had need of it!"

Before the surprised Ordener was able to turn his head, he had placed his foot on the

shoulders of his loyal vanquisher, and with a bound he was a dozen steps away. With another bound he was upon Ordener. He hung upon him like a panther digging his claws into the flank of a lion. His nails dug into the young man's shoulder ; his naked knees pressed against his hips, whilst his frightful face presented to Ordener's eyes the bloody mouth and savage teeth ready to tear him. He no longer spoke ; no human words escaped his panting gullet ; only a deep growling, mingled with hoarse, fierce cries, expressed his rage. It was something more hideous than a ferocious beast, more monstrous than a demon ; it was a man of whom no human traits remained.

Ordener had wavered under the assaults of the little man, and would have fallen under the unexpected blow, if one of the large pillars of the Druidical monument had not been behind to support him. He remained half fallen on his back, and out of breath under the weight of his formidable enemy. When one remembers that what we have just described took place in less time than we have taken to describe this it will be understood how horrible the attack was.

As we have said, the noble young man had staggered, but he did not tremble. He hastened to give a last thought to his Ethel.

This thought of love was like a prayer ; it gave him new strength. He encircled the monster with both arms ; then, seizing the blade of his sabre in the middle, drove the point in his spine. The brigand made a frightful out roar, and with a leap, which shook Ordener, he escaped from the arms of his fearless adversary and fell away some paces, carrying in his teeth a scrap of the green mantle which he had bitten in his fury.

He rose, supple and agile as a young chamois, and the combat recommenced for the third time in a manner more terrible than ever. Chance had placed the monster near a mass of stones, between which moss and brambles had grown for centuries. Two men of ordinary strength would hardly have been able to lift one of these masses. The brigand seized one of them in both hands and balanced it above his head. At this moment his appearance was frightful. The stone, hurled with violence traveled slowly through the air, and the young man had only time to step aside and escape. The granite block broke upon the walls of the cave with a frightful noise which echoed through the depths of the grotto.

Ordener had hardly time to recover his presence of mind, when a second mass was balanced in the brigand's hands. Irritated at

being so cowardly stoned, he sprang towards the little man, sabre in hand, hoping to change the fight ; but the formidable block, flying through the air, struck the frail naked blade, which fell in pieces like broken glass ; and the monster's wild laugh filled the cavern.

Ordener was disarmed.

" Hast thou anything to say to God or the devil before dying ? " cried the monster.

His eyes flamed, and all his muscles were swollen with rage and joy ; sprang for his hatchet which was lying on the ground in the folds of the mantle—poor Ethel !

Suddenly a distant uproar was heard from without. The monster stopped. The noise redoubled ; the shouts of men mingled with the plaintive moans of a bear. The brigand listened. The doleful cries continued. He quickly seized his hatchet and sprang, not towards Ordener, but towards one of the clefts of which we have already spoken as giving light. Ordener, struck with surprise at being thus forgotten, sprang to one of these natural doors, and saw, in a neighboring meadow, a great bear held at bay by seven hunters, amongst whom he could distinguish Kennybol.

He turned. The brigand was no longer in the grotto, but he heard from without a frightful voice crying :

" Friend ! Friend ! I am coming ! Look ! "

Ch. Country sc.





Ch' County Sc

* Margaret Davy

XXX.

Pierre, the good fellow, had lost all by the dice.

Régnier.

The Munckholm regiment of musketeers was marching through the defiles between Drontheim and Skongen. Sometimes when crossing a torrent, the long line of bayonets could be seen like a serpent with its scales glittering in the sun ; at other times it formed a spiral twist about a mountain like triumphal columns about which wind battalions in bronze. The soldiers marched along showing feelings of ill-humor and discontent, for these fine fellows like nothing but fighting or ease. The coarse jokes and old sarcasms which delighted them the day before amused them no more ; besides, the air was cold and the sky was cloudy. In order to raise a laugh in the ranks, a cantinière had to awkwardly fall from her horse, or a tin saucepan had to go bounding from rock to rock to the bottom of a precipice.

In order to dispel for little the weariness of the march Lieutenant Randmer, a young

Danish baron, hailed old Captain Lory, a soldier of fortune. The captain marched along, sombre and silent, with a heavy but sure step; the lieutenant, gay and careless, swung a switch which he had cut from the brushwood along the road-side.

“Well, captain, what is the matter? You are sad.”

“I certainly have cause to be so,” answered the old officer without raising his head.

“Come, come, no grief; look at me, am I sad? and I warrant I have at least as much cause to be as you.”

“I doubt it, Baron Randmer; I have lost my only comfort, I have lost all my fortune.”

“Captain Lory, our misfortune is precisely the same. Not two weeks ago Lieutenant Alberick won from me, by a throw of the dice, my fine castle of Randmer and its dependencies. I am ruined; but do you see me any the less gay on that account?”

The captain answered in a voice full of sorrow:

“Lieutenant, you have only lost your fine castle; but I,—I have lost my dog.”

At this answer the young man’s frivolous features were undecided between laughter and compassion.

“Captain,” said he, “console yourself; why, I, who have lost my castle . . .”

The other interrupted him.

"What of that? Besides, you will win another castle."

"And you will find another dog."

The old man shook his head.

"Find another dog; I will never recover my poor Drake."

He stopped; large tears gathered in his eyes and fell one by one upon his hard and weather-beaten face.

"I have never," continued he, "loved any one but him; I have never known father nor mother. May God give thee peace, as well as to poor Drake!—Lieutenant Randmer, he saved my life in the Pomeranian war; I called him Drake in honor of the famous admiral.—He was a fine dog! He never changed towards me with my changes of fortune. After the battle of Oholfen, great General Schack patted him with his hand, saying to me: 'You have there a very fine dog, Sergeant Lory!' For then I was still only a sergeant."

"Ah!" interrupted the young baron, swinging his switch, "It must seem queer to be a sergeant."

The old soldier of fortune did not hear; he seemed to be talking to himself, and only some inarticulate words escaped his lips.

"Poor Drake! To escape safe and sound so often from breaches and trenches, only to be drowned like a cat in the cursed Gulf of Drontheim! My poor dog! My brave friend! You were worthy of dying, like me, on the field of battle."

"Brave captain," cried the lieutenant, "how can you remain so sad? We will fight perhaps to-morrow."

"Yes," answered the old captain disdainfully, "against rare enemies!"

"What, these brigands the miners! These devils the mountaineers!"

"Stone-cutters, highway robbers! Gentlemen who in battle do not even know how to form the pig's head or Gustavus Adolphus' corner! Nice rabble to face such as I, who went through all the wars of Pomerania and of Holstein! The campaigns of Scania and of Dalecarlie! I, who fought under glorious General Schack, and under valiant Count Guldenlew!"

"But, don't you know," interrupted Randmer, "these brigands have a celebrated chief, a giant as strong and savage as Goliath, a brigand who drinks nothing but human blood, a demon in every way satanic."

"Who?" asked the other.

"Why! The famous Han of Iceland!"

"Phew! I wager this formidable general does not even know how to load a musket in four movements or to load a carbine!"

Randmer burst into laughter.

"Yes, laugh away," continued the captain. "It will be very fine indeed to cross good sabres with vile picks and noble pikes with pitch-forks! Worthy enemies! My poor Drake would not have condescended to take one of them by the leg!"

The captain continued to give free rein to his indignation, until he was interrupted by the arrival of an officer who ran towards them quite out of breath.

"Captain Lory! My dear Randmer!"

"Well?" said they together.

"Friends, I am frozen with horror!—d'Ahlefeld! Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld! The son of the grand chancellor! You know, my dear Baron Randmer, Frederick—so elegant—so foppish! . . ."

"Yes," answered the young baron, "very elegant! Nevertheless, at the last ball at Charlottenburg, my disguise was in much better taste than his.—But what has happened to him?"

"I know of whom you speak," said Lory at the same time, "Frederick d'Ahlefeld, the lieutenant of the third company, who wears blue facings. He is careless enough about his duty."

"They will never complain about him again, Captain Lory."

"Why?" said Randmer.

"He is in garrison at Walhstrom," continued the old captain coldly.

"Precisely," added the other, "the colonel has just received a message.—Poor Frederick!"

"But what of him? Captain Bollar, you frighten me."

Old Lory continued :

"Phew! Our fop has missed a roll call, as usual; the captain has sent the son of the grand chancellor to prison; that, I am sure, is all the misfortune that has happened to so disturb you."

Bollar placed his hand on Lory's shoulder.

"Captain Lory, Lieutenant d'Ahlfeld has been devoured alive."

The two captains looked fixedly at each other, and Randmer, astonished for a moment, suddenly began to laugh boisterously.

"Ah! Ah! Captain Bollar, I see that you keep up your practical jokes. But I warn you I will not be fooled."

And the lieutenant, crossing his arms, gave free play to his gayety, swearing that what amused him most was the credulity with which Lory accepted the amusing inventions of Bollar. The tale, said he, was really droll, it was quite a bright idea to have Frederick,

who gave so much tender and ridiculous care to his skin, devoured alive.

"Randmer," said Bollar gravely, "you are a fool. I tell you d'Ahlefeld is dead. I have it from the colonel—dead!"

"Oh! How well he plays his rôle!" replied the baron, still laughing, "how amusing he is!"

Bollar shrugged his shoulders, and turned towards old Lory, who coolly asked for details.

"Yes, truly, my dear Captain Bollar," added the indefatigable mocker, "tell us how the poor devil was eaten. Did he form a breakfast for a wolf or a supper for a bear?"

"The colonel," said Bollar, "had just received a dispatch, which instructed the garrison of Walhstrom to fall back towards us, before a considerable party of the insurgents."

Old Lory knitted his brows.

"It was then," continued Bollar, "that Lieutenant Frederick d'Ahlefeld, having been hunting for the last three days, in the mountains near the ruin of Arbar, met there a monster, who carried him into his cavern and there devoured him."

Here Lieutenant Randmer redoubled his joyous exclamations.

"Oh! Oh! How easily good Lory believes fairy tales! It is fine, keep serious, my dear

Bollar. You are admirably droll. But you do not tell us what this monster, this ogre, this vampire is, that has carried and eaten a lieutenant as though he were a young kid!"

"I won't tell *you*," murmured Bollar impatiently; "but I will tell Lory, who is not so idiotically incredulous.—My dear Lory, the monster who has drunk Frederick's blood is Han of Iceland."

"The colonel of the brigands!" cried the old officer.

"Well, my brave Lory," said the railler Randmer, "has one any need of the manual of arms when one chews so well?"

"Baron Randmer," said Bollar, "you have the same character as d'Ahlefeld; take care that you have not the same end."

"I swear," cried the young man, "that what amuses me the most is the serious imperturbability of Captain Bollar."

"And," replied Bollar, "what frightens me most, is the inexhaustible gayety of Lieutenant Randmer."

At this moment a group of officers who appeared to be holding an exciting conversation, approached.

"Ah, 'egad," cried Randmer, "I must amuse them with this invention of Bollar's—Comrades," said he advancing towards them,

"haven't you heard? poor Frederick d'Ahlefeld has just been crunched up alive by the barbarous Han of Iceland."

At these words, he could not suppress a burst of laughter, which, to his great surprise, was received by the new-comers by cries of indignation.

"What, you laugh! I would not have believed that Randmer would repeat such news in such a manner—laugh at such a misfortune!"

"What," said Randmer, troubled, "can it be that it is true?"

"Why! you have just said it!" cried they, "can it be that you do not believe your own words?"

"But I thought it was a joke of Bollar's."

An old officer spoke.

"The joke would have been in bad taste; but unfortunately it is not one. Baron Woethaün, our colonel, has just received the fatal news."

"A horrible adventure! It is frightful!" repeated the crowd together.

"So we are going," said one of them, "to fight wolves and bears with human faces!"

"We will receive musket shots," said another, "without knowing where they come from; we will be killed one by one, like pheasants in a pigeon-house."

"The death of d'Ahlefeld," cried Bollar in a solemn voice, "makes one shudder. Our regiment is unfortunate. The death of Dispolsen, that of the poor soldiers found at Cascadthymore, and that of d'Ahlefeld; three tragic events in a very short time."

Young Baron Randmer, who had remained silent, awoke from his reverie.

"It seems impossible," said he; "Frederick danced so well!"

And after this profound reflection, he became silent, whilst Captain Lory vowed that he was very much afflicted at the death of the young lieutenant, and remarked to the second musketeer, Toric Belfast, that the copper of his shoulder strap was not so bright as usual.





XXXI.

Hush ! Hush ! There is a man descending
by means of a ladder.

Ah ! Yes, it is a spy.

Heaven could not grant me a greater favor
than the power to give up to you my life. I am
with you; but tell, I pray, to whom this army
belongs ?

To the Comte de Barcelone.

What count ?

LOPE DE VEGA—*La Fuerza latimosa.*

There is something sinister and desolate in
the aspect of a flat and barren country, when
the sun has disappeared, and one is alone,
when the rustle of the dried-up grass, and the
monotonous cry of the grasshoppers is the
only sound heard ; and when one sees only
dark shapeless clouds upon the horizon, like
phantoms or ghosts.

Such was the impression which mingled
with Ordener's sad thoughts, the evening of
this fruitless meeting with the brigand of
Iceland. Stunned for a moment by his sudden

disappearance, he at first wished to follow him, but he became lost in the heath, and he had wandered all day over the wildest and most savage country, without finding any trace of man. At sunset, he found himself in the middle of a large plain which showed on all sides an equal circular horizon where nothing promised shelter to the young traveler worn out with fatigue and hunger.

It would have been bad enough if his bodily sufferings had not been aggravated by his sadness of mind ; but, alas, it was so ! He had attained the end of his journey but had not fulfilled its object. He had not now even the fond hopes that he had when in pursuit of the brigand ; and now in place of them he had nothing but discouraging thoughts. What would he do ? How could he return to Schumacker without being able to ask his benediction with Ethel ? And what had become of the fatal casket ? And his marriage with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld ! Perhaps he might at least rescue Ethel from her disgraceful captivity and fly with her, seeking happiness in some distant exile !

He wrapped himself in his cloak and laid down upon the ground. The sky was black ; stormy and ragged clouds tore along at intervals like funereal crape, driven by a cold wind which swept across the plain. The young

man hardly thought of these signs of the approach of a violent storm ; and besides, could he find a refuge from the storm any more than from his miserable thoughts ?

Suddenly he heard confused sounds of human voices. Surprised, he lifted his head and noticed, a short distance away, something like shadows moving about in the darkness. He watched them ; a light shone in the midst of the mysterious group, and Ordener saw, with an astonishment easy to conceive, each of the phantasmagorial figures descend into the earth one by one. All disappeared.

Ordener was above the superstitions of his time and country. His grave and mature mind knew nothing of the vain beliefs of the strange terrors which torment the infancy of a people as well as the child born of man.

Nevertheless there was something supernatural in this singular apparition which filled him with a feeling contrary to reason ; for he did not feel sure that the spirits of the dead did sometimes come back to earth.

He rose, made the sign of the cross, and moved towards the place where the visions had disappeared. Large drops of rain began to fall ; his cloak fluttered like a sail, and the plume of his hat, tormented by the wind, beat upon his face.

Suddenly he stopped—a light showed across his path from a sort of large circular pit, into which he would certainly have fallen if the light had not luckily shone. He approached the opening. A vague flickering light showed at the bottom of an immense hole of frightful depth, hollowed in the bowels of the earth. These lights, which seemed like a magic fire burned by gnomes, accentuated, in some way, the darkness which the eye had to pierce to discover it.

The fearless young man, at the edge of the abyss, listened. The distant murmur of voices reached him. He had no doubt that the mysterious beings which appeared and disappeared before his eyes had gone down in the pit, and he felt an irrepressible desire, doubtless the destiny of his fate, to follow them ; he felt ready even to follow the spectres even into the mouth of hell. Besides, the storm was beginning with fury, and this pit offered a shelter. But how to descend ? How had those, whom he wished to follow, gone down, if they were not ghosts ? A second gleam came to his rescue, and he saw at his feet the upper end of a ladder, which disappeared in the depths of the pit. It was formed of a stout vertical joist, through which, at regular distances, were driven short horizontal bars of iron intended for the feet and hands

of those who dared to venture into the chasm.

Ordener did not hesitate. He daringly swung himself on to the ladder, and descended into the abyss, without knowing where it led and not knowing whether he would ever see daylight again. Soon he could no longer see the sky above his head. Soon the heavy rain which beat upon the surface of the earth came to him only as vapor or mist. Soon the uproar of the storm was heard only as moaning. He went down, down, and yet hardly seemed to get nearer to the light. Undiscouraged, however, he kept on, although a misstep might at any moment have thrown him into the abyss.

Meanwhile, the air became closer, the sound of voices became more distinct, the light began to color the walls of the pit—signs that he was at least nearing the bottom. He descended a few steps farther and could clearly see at the foot of the ladder the entrance to a tunnel from which came the following words :

“Kennybol has not arrived,” said a voice impatiently.

“What can be keeping him?” said the same voice after a moment’s silence.

“We do not know, Master Hacket,” was answered.

"He was to pass the night in the house of his sister, Maase Braall, in the village of Surb," added another voice.

"You see," said the first speaker, "I keep all my engagements. I agreed to bring you Han of Iceland for a chief; I have brought him."

A murmur, difficult to understand, answered the words. Ordener's curiosity, already awakened by the mention of Kennybol's name, redoubled when he heard that of Han of Iceland.

The same voice continued :

"My friends, Jonas and Norbith, if Kennybol is late, what does it matter? We are already numerous enough to fear nothing; did you find your standards in the ruins of Crag?"

"Yes, Master Hacket," answered many voices.

"Well! Raise the standard, everything is ready!"

"There is the money! There is your invincible chief. Courage! March to the deliverance of noble Schumacker, the unfortunate Count Griffenfeld!"

"Long live Schumacker!" repeated the crowd in one voice. And the name of Schumacker re-echoed through the cavern.

Ordener, full of curiosity and astonishment, listened, panting with excitement. He could

neither believe nor understand what he heard. Schumacker mixed up with Kennybol and Han of Iceland ! What dark tragedy was brooding ?

"Listen," continued the same voice, "you see the friend, the confidant of Count Griffenfeld."

It was the first time that Ordener had ever heard the voice. It continued :

"Give me your confidence, as I give you mine. Friends, everything favors you ; you will reach Drontheim without meeting a single enemy."

"Master Hacket," interrupted a voice, "lead us on. Peters tells me he saw the entire Munckholm regiment marching through the defiles against us."

"You are mistaken," answered the other with authority. "The government as yet knows nothing of your revolt, and its fancied security is such that he who rejects your just complaints, your oppressor, and the oppressor of the illustrious and unfortunate Schumacker, General Levin de Knud, has left Drontheim to go to the capitol to assist at the celebration of the famous marriage of his pupil, Ordener Guldenlew, with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld."

One can imagine Ordener's feelings, to hear in this wild and desert country, under this mysterious vault, all the names of those in

whom he was interested, and above all even his very own ! A fearful doubt rose in his mind. Could it be true ? Was this really an agent of Count Griffenfeld whose voice he heard ? What ! Schumacker, the venerable old man, the noble father of his noble Ethel, revolting against the king his lord, consorting with brigands, starting a civil war ! And it was for this hypocrite, for this rebel, that he, son of the viceroy of Norway, pupil of General Levin, had compromised his future, had risked his life ! It was for him that he had sought out and fought this Icelandic brigand, with whom Schumacker seemed to be in confidence, since he had been placed at the head of these brigands ! Who knows that even the iron casket, for which he, Ordener, had been ready to spill his blood, did not contain the secrets of this disgraceful plot ? Or perhaps the vindictive prisoner of Munckholm had played with him ? Perhaps he had discovered his name ; perhaps, and how dismal this thought was to the generous young man, he had hoped, by encouraging this fatal journey, to get rid of the son of an enemy ?

Alas ! such were the disconsolate thoughts that crowded upon Ordener's mind. The noble young man wished himself dead at this fatal moment ; it seemed to him that all pleasure in life was gone. There were many

things in the assertions of he who spoke as the envoy of Griffenfeld which seemed contradictory or doubtful ; but as it all seemed intended to mislead the unfortunate mountaineers, Schumacker was none the less guilty in his eyes, and Schumacker was the father of his Ethel !

These thoughts so disturbed him that he almost fell. He recovered and continued to listen ; for one sometimes waits with inexplicable impatience for unhappiness that is none the less.

“ Yes,” continued the voice of the envoy, “ you are commanded by the formidable Han of Iceland. Who will dare to oppose you ? Your cause is that of your wives and of your children unjustly deprived of your rights ; of an unfortunate nobleman, for twenty years unjustly held in an infamous prison. Come, Schumacker and liberty await you. Death to the tyrants !”

“ Death !” repeated a thousand voices ; and throughout the cavern could be heard the noise of arms and the sound of mountain horns.

“ Stop !” cried Ordener. He had precipitately descended the remainder of the ladder. The idea of sparing Schumacker this crime and so much unhappiness to his country filled his mind. But, the moment that he appeared

on the threshold of the cavern, the fear came to him that he might, by imprudent remarks, lose the father of his Ethel and perhaps Ethel herself, and this fear drowned all other thoughts; so that he stood there, pale and astonished, gazing at the singular picture which appeared to his sight.

It was like an immense square in a subterranean town surrounded by pillars which supported the roof. These pillars shone like columns of crystal and reflected the torches borne by strangely dressed and queerly armed men. One might well have taken it for one of the fabulous meetings of which the old chronicles speak, of sorcerers and demons who carried stars for torches, and who lit up at night the old woods and crumbling castles.

A loud cry arose.

“A stranger! Death! Death!”

A hundred arms were already raised against Ordener. He put his hand to his side to grasp his sword. Noble young man! In his generous impulse he had forgotten that he was alone and unarmed.

“Hold, hold!” cried a voice, which Ordener knew as that of Schumacker’s envoy.

He was a little fat man, dressed in black, with false and glittering eyes. He advanced towards Ordener.

“Who are you?” said he.

Ordener did not answer ; he was seized by many hands and there was no place on his breast upon which the point of a sword or the barrel of a pistol did not rest.

"Are you afraid?" asked the little man with a smile.

"If your hand were upon my heart instead of these swords," said the young man coldly, "you would find that it beat no faster than yours, supposing you have a heart."

"Ah ! Ah !" said the little man, "he is high-spirited ! Well ! He may die." And he turned on his heel.

"Give me death," replied Ordener ; "it is all I wish of you."

"A moment, Master Hacket," said an old man with a bushy beard, who leaned upon his musket. "You are in my house, and I have the sole right to send this Christian to meet the dead whom he has seen here."

Master Hacket began to laugh. "By my faith, friend Jonas, as you please. It makes little difference whether this spy is judged by you or by me, provided he is condemned."

The old man turned towards Ordener :

"Come, tell us who you are, you who so daringly wish to know who we are."

Ordener remained silent. Surrounded by the partisans of the very Schumacker for

whom he would so willingly have given his blood, he felt no other desire than to die.

"His courtesy does not wish to answer," said the old man, "when the fox is caught he no longer cries. Kill him."

"My brave Jonas," said Hacket, "suppose we let the death of this man be the first exploit of Han of Iceland among you."

"Yes, yes!" cried several voices.

Ordener, astonished, but still undaunted, looked everywhere for the eyes of Han of Iceland, with whom he had so valiantly fought for his life that very morning, and saw, with redoubled surprise, a man of colossal stature, dressed in the costume of a mountaineer, advance towards him. The giant fixed a look of stupid atrocity upon Ordener, and asked for a hatchet.

"You are not Han of Iceland," said Ordener decidedly.

"Let him die! Let him die!" cried Hacket in a furious voice.

Ordener saw that he must die. He put his hands into his breast to draw out the lock of Ethel's hair to give it a last kiss. This movement caused a paper to fall from his belt.

"What is the paper?" said Hacket. "Nor-bith, take the paper."

This Norbith was a young man whose dark, hard features had an expression of nobleness. He picked up the paper and unfolded it.

“Good God!” cried he, “it is the pass of my poor friend Christopher Nedlam, my unfortunate comrade who was executed a week ago in the public square at Skongen for passing false money.”

“Well!” said Hacket in a disappointed tone, “keep the paper. I thought it of more importance. You, my dear Han of Iceland, may expedite your man.”

Young Norbith placed himself in front of Ordener, crying:

“This man is under my protection. My head will fall before a single hair of his. I will not allow the safe conduct of my friend Christopher Nedlam to be violated.”

Ordener, so miraculously protected, bowed his head in shame; for he remembered how disdainfully he had accepted the gift of the Chaplain Athanasius Munder:—“May the gift of the dying be a benefit to the traveler!”

“Give me my hatchet,” repeated the giant.

“He shall not die!” cried Norbith. “What would the spirit of poor Nedlam say, who was so unjustly hung? I assure you that he will not die; for Nedlam did not wish him to die.”

"Indeed," said old Jonas, "Norbith is right. How can you wish to kill this stranger, Master Hacket? He has the pass of Christopher Nedlam."

"But he is a spy, a spy," replied Hacket.

The old man placed himself beside the young man in front of Ordener, and they said gravely together :

"He has the pass of Christopher Nedlam, who was hung at Skongen."

Hacket saw that he must give in; for all the others began to murmur, saying that the stranger could not die, since he carried the safe conduct of Nedlam the Counterfeiter.

"Come," said he, between his teeth, with concentrated rage. "Let him live then. Besides it is your business."

"If he were the devil I would not kill him," said Norbith, triumphantly.

So speaking, he turned to Ordener.

"Listen," continued he, "you should be a good comrade, since you have the pass of Nedlam, my poor friend. We are the royal miners. We are revolting so as to get rid of the tax. Master Hacket, whom you see, says that we take up arms for a certain Count Schumacker; but I do not know him. Stranger, our cause is just. Listen, and answer as though you were answering your patron saint. Do you wish to join us?"

An idea occurred to Ordener.

"Yes," replied he.

Norbith offered him a sabre, which he received in silence.

"Brother," said the young chief, "if you wish to betray us, you will commence by killing me."

At this moment the sound of a trumpet sounded under the arches of the mine and distant voices were heard saying: "Here is Kennybol."

XXXII.

He has thoughts in his head which rise to the
heavens.

Spanish Romances.

Sometimes the mind has a sudden inspiration, which a multitude of thought would not have solved better.

Therefore we will not try to analyze the willful and secret impulse which, by the proposal of young Norbith, threw the noble son of the viceroy of Norway, like an outlaw, among a crowd of revolting bandits. It was, doubtless, a desire to solve this dark mystery, mingled with a bitter disgust of life, a careless despair of the future; perhaps some doubt of the guilt of Schumacker, inspired by the suspicious appearance of the men, whose sinister looks struck the young man, or by an unconscious belief in truth; and above all by his love for Ethel. And, finally: one clear-sighted friend might be of use to Schumacker among all these blind partisans.

XXXIII.

Is that the chief? His looks frighten me ;
I dare not speak to him.

MATURIN—*Bertram.*

When he heard the cries which announced the arrival of the famous hunter Kennybol, Hacket sprang towards him, leaving Ordener with the two other chiefs.

“ You are here at last, my dear Kennybol ! Come, let me present you to your formidable chief, Han of Iceland.”

Upon hearing this name, Kennybol, who was pale, breathless and disordered, his face bathed in sweat and his hands covered with blood, sprang back.

“ Han of Iceland !”

“ Come,” said Hacket, “ be calm ! He has come to help you. Look on him only as a friend, as a companion.”

Kennybol did not hear him.

“ Han of Iceland here !” he repeated.

“ Why ! Yes,” said Hacket with an equivocal laugh ; “ are you afraid of him ?”

"What!" interrupted the hunter for the third time, "you swear to me—Han of Iceland in this mine?"

Hacket turned towards the others:

"Can our brave Kennybol be crazy?"

Then, addressing Kennybol:

"I see that it is fear of Han of Iceland that has made you late."

Kennybol raised his hand to heaven.

"By Etheldera, martyred saint of Norway, it was not fear of Han of Iceland, Master Hacket, but Han of Iceland himself, I swear to you, that prevented me from being here sooner."

These words created a murmur of astonishment amongst the crowd of mountaineers and miners which surrounded the speakers, and caused the same cloud upon Hacket's brow that Ordener's greeting had only a few minutes before.

"What! What do you say?" asked he, lowering his voice.

"I say, Master Hacket, that if it had not been for your cursed Han of Iceland I would have been here before the first cry of the owl."

"Indeed! What has he done to you?"

"Oh! Do not ask me; but may my beard get white in a day if any one ever again finds me bear-hunting."

"Have you nearly been eaten up by a bear?"

Kennybol shrugged his shoulders in disdain :

"A bear ! A fine enemy ! Kennybol eaten by a bear ! For what do you take me, Master Hacket ?"

"Ah, I beg your pardon," said Hacket, smiling.

"If you knew what had happened to me, my brave sir," said the old hunter lowering his voice, "you would not again tell me that Han of Iceland is here."

Hacket again seemed disconcerted. He caught Kennybol roughly by the arm, as though he feared he would approach the spot where, above the heads of the miners, appeared the enormous head of the giant.

"My dear Kennybol," said he, in a voice almost solemn, "tell me, I pray you, what made you late. You know that just at this time it might perhaps be of the greatest importance."

"That is true," said Kennybol, after a moment of reflection.

Then, yielding to Hacket's repeated requests, he told him how, that very morning, aided by six companions, he had driven a white bear to the neighborhood of the grotto of Walderhog, without noticing in the heat of the pursuit, that they were near that dreaded place ; how the roars of the bear at bay had

attracted a little man, a monster, a demon, who, armed with a stone hatchet, threw himself upon them in defense of the bear. The appearance of this sort of devil, who could be no other than Han, the Icelandic demon, had frozen all seven with horror ; finally, his six unfortunate comrades had fallen victims of the two monsters, and he, Kennybol, only owed his safety to prompt flight which had not been prevented, thanks to his agility, to Han of Iceland's fatigue, and, above all, to the protection of the kindly patron of the huntsman, Saint Sylvestre.

" You see, Master Hacket," said he, finishing his story, which he had ornamented with all the mountaineer's flowers of rhetoric, and still full of his terror, " you see that if I am late, it is not I who should be blamed, and that it is impossible that the demon of Iceland, whom I left this morning in the heather near Walderhog with his bear, crunching the bodies of my six poor comrades, could now be here, as your friend, in the mine of Apsyl-Corh, at this meeting. I protest that it is not possible. I know him, now, the demon incarnate ; I have seen him ! "

Hacket, who had listened attentively, began in a grave voice :

" My brave friend Kennybol, when you speak of Han of Iceland or of hell, do not

think anything impossible. I knew all that you have just told me."

An expression of most extreme astonishment and naïve credulity appeared in the features of the old hunter of the Kole Mountains.

"What!"

"Yes," continued Hacket, in whose face an acute observer might have seen something triumphant and sardonic, "I knew all, except however that you were the hero of this sad adventure. Han of Iceland told it to me as we came here."

"Truly?" said Kennybol; and his gaze on Hacket became one of respect and fear.

Hacket continued with the same coolness:

"No doubt of it; but now, be easy, I am going to lead you to this formidable Han of Iceland."

Kennybol gave a cry of terror.

"Have no fear, I tell you," continued Hacket. "You must look upon him only as your chief and comrade; only be careful not to remind him of anything that happened this morning. You understand?"

He had to yield, but it was only with internal repugnance that he consented to allow himself to be presented to the demon. He advanced towards the group where Ordener, Jonas and Norbith were.

"My good Jonas, my dear Norbith," said Kennybol, "may God help you!"

"We have need of him, Kennybol," said Jonas.

At this moment Kennybol noticed Ordener, who was looking at him.

"Ah! you here, young man," said he, stepping quickly towards him and holding out his rough hand, "welcome. It seems that your daring has been successful."

Ordener, who did not understand what the mountaineer seems to know so well, was about to ask an explanation, when Norbith cried:

"You know this stranger then, Kennybol?"

"By my guardian angel! Do I know him? I love him and esteem him. He is as devoted as we are to the good cause."

And he threw towards Ordener a second look of intelligence, which he was about to answer, when Hacket, who had been to look for his giant, whom all the bandits seemed to avoid with terror, hailed them, saying :

"My brave huntsman, Kennybol, here is your chief, the famous Han of Klipstadur!"

Kennybol threw upon the gigantic brigand a glance more of surprise than of fear, and whispered in Hacket's ear.

"Master Hacket, the Han of Iceland which I left this morning at Walderhog was a little man."

Hacket replied in a low voice:

"You forget, Kennybol! a demon!"

"True," said the credulous hunter, "he has changed his form."

And he turned away trembling to furtively make the sign of the cross.

XXXIV.

The mask approached; it was Angelo himself; the rogue knew his business; he must make sure of it.

LESSING.

It was in a sombre forest of old oaks, where daylight hardly penetrated, that a short man hailed another who appeared to be waiting and alone. The following conversation commenced with lowered voices :

“ I hope your grace will deign to pardon me if I am late ! Many incidents have made me late.”

“ What were they ?”

“ The chief of the mountaineers, Kennybol, did not arrive at the meeting place until midnight and we were besides disturbed by an unexpected witness.”

“ Who ?”

“ By a man who blundered like a fool into the midst of our sanhedrim. I thought at first that he was a spy, and I wished to dispatch him ; but he carried a safeguard from some one very much respected by our miners,





and they took him under their protection. I considered, on reflection, that he could be nothing but a curious traveler or a crazy savant. At any rate, I have made allowance for him."

"Did everything else go well?"

"Very well. The miners of Guldbranshal and Faroe, commanded by young Norbith and old Jonas, and the mountaineers of Kole, led by Kennybol, should be on the march at this moment. At four miles from the Blue Star, their companions of Hubfalls and Sund-Moér will join them; those at Konigsberg and the troop of Smiasen iron-workers who have already forced the garrison of Walhstrom to retreat, as the noble count knows, are waiting some miles further on. Finally, my dear and honored master, all the bands, joined together, will halt to-night two miles from Skongen, in the gorges of the North Post."

"But your Han of Iceland, how have they received him?"

"With entire credulity."

"Can I not avenge myself on this monster for the death of my son? What a misfortune that he escaped!"

"My noble lord, first of all use the name of Han of Iceland to avenge yourself on Schumacker, and you will afterwards find a way to avenge yourself upon Han himself.

The insurgents will march all to-day and will halt to-night to pass the night in the defile of North Post, two miles from Skongen."

"What! You will let such a considerable mob assemble so near Skongen?—Musdœmon!"

"A suspicion, noble count! Your grace has only to send, this very moment, a messenger to Colonel Vœthaün, whose entire regiment should now be at Skongen; notify him that all the forces of the rebels will be camped to-night in the defile of the North Post, which seems to have been expressly created for an ambuscade."

"I understand you; but why, my dear fellow, have you done this if the rebels are so numerous?"

"The more formidable the insurrection, my lord, the greater the crime of Schumacker and the greater your victory. Besides, what difference does it make if it is cut down at one blow?"

"Good! But why is the place for the halt so near Skongen?"

"Because, in all the mountains, it is the only place where defense is impossible. Only those intended to figure before the judges will be allowed to come out alive."

"Marvelous! Something urges me, Musdœmon, to promptly terminate this business.

If everything is reassuring in one direction, all is disquieting in the other. You know that we have had secret search made for the papers which might have fallen into possession of Dispolsen."

"Well, my lord?"

"Well, I have just learned this moment that the searcher has had mysterious interviews with the cursed astrologer Cumbysulsum."

"Who died lately?"

"Yes, and that as he was dying the old sorcerer gave back to Schumacker's agent some papers."

"Damnation! He had some of my papers, showing our plan!"

"*Your* plan, Musdæmon!"

"A thousand pardons, noble count! But why did your grace put yourself in the hands of this charlatan Cumbysulsum? The old traitor!"

"Listen, Musdæmon, I am not, like you, without belief or faith. It was not without good cause, my dear fellow, that I always had confidence in the magical science of old Cumbysulsum."

"If your grace had only had as little faith in his faithfulness as confidence in his science! However, there is no need to be alarmed, my noble master. Dispolsen is dead, his papers are lost; in some days there will be no opportunity to use them if he had them."

"In any event what charge could be brought against me?"

"Or against me, protected by your grace?"

"Yes, yes, my dear fellow, you could, certainly, count on me; but hasten, I pray you, the upshot of all this; I will send the message to the colonel. Come, my men wait for me behind these bushes, and we must take the road back to Drontheim, as the Mecklenburger has no doubt left. Continue to serve me well, and, notwithstanding all the Cumby-sulsums and Dispolsens on the earth, you can count on me through life and death!"

"I beg your grace to believe.—The devil!"

Here they both disappeared into the woods, and their voices gradually died away; and soon nothing was heard but the tread of the two horses in the distance.





XXXV.

. . . Strike up, drummers ! They are coming !
. . . They have all made vows, and have all
vowed the same thing ;—not to return to Castille
without the count, our prisoner ; their lord.

They have a stone statue of him in a chariot,
and are determined not to turn back, unless they
see he himself in place of the statue.

And as a sign that he who takes a step back-
ward shall be looked upon as a traitor, they have
all raised their hands and made a vow.

And they marched towards Arlançon, as fast
as the beast drawing the chariot could go ; they
stopped no more than the sun.

Burgos was deserted ; only the women and
children remained.

They talked among themselves of horses and
falcons, and shouted that Castille must be freed
from the tribute she paid to Léon.

And just before entering Navarre, they met on
the frontier. . . . *Spanish Romance.*

While the conversation which we have just
read was taking place in one of the forests
about Smiasen, the rebels, divided into three
columns, left the lead mine of Apsyl-Corh, by
the principal entrance, which opened into the
head of a deep ravine.

Ordener, who, in spite of his desire to be near Kennybol, had been put in the ranks of Norbith's band, could at first make out nothing but a long procession of torches, the glare from which was reflected on the axes, forks, picks, clubs, studded with iron points, enormous hammers, pikes and other tools, with which the rebels were accustomed, mingled with other arms which showed that the revolt was the result of a conspiracy; such as muskets, sabres and carbines. When the sun arose, and the light of the torches had turned into smoke, he was better able to observe the aspect of this singular army which moved forward in disorder, with rough songs and wild cries, like a pack of hungry wolves going to feast on a body. It was divided into three divisions, or at any rate into three crowds. First marched that of the Kole mountaineers, commanded by Kennybol, whom they all resembled in their costumes of beast-skins, and likewise by their rough and hardy appearance. Then came Norbith's young miners and the old ones under Jonas, with their large felt hats, wide pantaloons, arms entirely bare and black faces, whose eyes looked stupidly at the sun. Above these tumultuous bands red banners floated pell-mell, on which were different devices, such as: *Long live Schumacker! Deliver our liberator!*

Liberty for the miners! Liberty for Count Griffenfeld! Death to Guldenlew! Death to the oppressors! Death to d'Ahlefeld! The rebels, however, seemed to look upon these ensigns as much as burdens as ornaments, and passed them from hand to hand when the standard-bearers were tired or wished to join in the psalm singing or vociferous shouts of their comrades.

The rear guard of this strange army was composed of six carts drawn by reindeers and large asses, destined no doubt to carry the ammunition; and the advance guard, led by Hacket, was headed by the giant, who marched alone, armed with a club and a hatchet, and behind him came the ranks commanded by Kennybol, who kept at a good distance through terror, never took his eyes off him as though to follow the different transfiguration which his diabolical chief might wish to make.

This torrent of rebels thus descended, accompanied by a confused murmur, and filled the pine woods with the noise of trumpets used by the mountaineers of upper Drontheim. It was increased by the arrival of the different bands of Sund-Moér, Hubfallo, Konigsberg, and the troop of Smiasen iron-workers, who presented an odd contrast to the rest of the rebels. They were large tall men, armed with pincers and

hammers, having as cuirass, large leather aprons and carrying no other ensign than a large wooden cross; they marched gravely and in time, with a regularity that was rather religious than military, with no other war cry than psalms and Bible songs. They had no other leader than their cross-bearer, who marched unarmed at their head.

All this mob of rebels met no other human being in its march. At their approach, the shepherd drove his flock into a cavern, and the peasants deserted their villages; for the inhabitants of the plains and valleys were all the same; they feared the bandit's trumpet as much as the archer's horn.

Thus they crossed hills and forests, following winding paths where they found more traces of wild beasts than of man, circling the ponds, crossing the torrents, the ravines and the marches. Ordener did not recognize one of these places. Once only, looking up, he noticed on the horizon the bluish outline of a large curved rock. He leaned towards one of his rough traveling companions and asked :

" My friend, what is that rock down there, in the south, to the right ? "

" It is the Vulture's Neck, the rock of Oëlmœ, " answered the other.

Ordener sighed deeply.





XXXVI.

My daughter, may God guard and bless you !

RÉGNIER.

Monkey, paroquets, combs and ribbons, were all ready at Countess d'Ahlefeld's to receive Lieutenant Frederick. She had just received the last novel of the famous Scudéry at great expense. It had, by her order, been richly bound with silver and gilt clasps, and was placed between the essence bottles and handkerchief boxes, on the elegant toilet table with the legs ornamented with inlaid woods, with which she had furnished the future boudoir of her dear son Frederick. When she had thus attended to the minute details of these maternal cares, which had up to now filled her thoughts, she thought she could think of nothing better than to annoy Schumacker and Ethel. The departure of General Levin had left them defenseless.

Many things had happened in the donjon at Munckholm in a short while, about which she had only been able to learn vague rumors.

Who was the serf, vassal, or peasant, who, to believe Frederick's ambiguous and embarrassed words, had gained the love of the ex-chancellor's daughter? What were the relations of Baron Ordener with the prisoners at Munckholm? What were the incomprehensible motives for the singular absence of Ordener at the very time when the two kingdoms were busy with the approaching marriage with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld, whom he seemed to despise? Finally, what had passed between Levin de Knud and Schumacker? The brain of the countess was full of conjectures. She finally resolved, in order to clear up these conjectures, to risk a descent to Munckholm, hoping at the same time to satisfy her woman's curiosity and her hatred for her enemies.

One evening when Ethel, alone in the garden of the donjon, had just, for the sixth time, engraved some mysterious sign upon the black post of the door where she had last seen Ordener, this door opened. The girl trembled. It was the first time that this postern had been opened since it had been closed upon her.

A tall pale woman, dressed in black, stood before her. Her smile was like poisoned honey, and there was, beneath her peaceable and kindly look, something like an expression of hate, mingled with involuntary pity and admiration.

Ethel gazed upon her with astonishment, almost with fear. Since her old nurse, who had died in her arms, this was the first woman who had ever entered the interior of Munckholm.

"My child," said the stranger softly, "you are the daughter of the prisoner of Munckholm?"

Ethel did not dare to turn her head; something about the prisoner repelled her, and there seemed to be remorse in the sound of this smooth voice. She answered:

"I am called Ethel Schumacker. My father tells me that they named me, when in my cradle, Countess of Tongsberg and Princess Wollin."

"Your father tells you that!" cried the woman in a voice which she at once altered. Then she added: "You have suffered many misfortunes."

"Misfortune received me at my birth, in its iron arms," answered the young prisoner. "My noble father says that it will only give me up to death."

A smile passed the lips of the stranger, who replied in a voice of pity.

"And you do not rebel against those who have forced you to pass your life in this cell? You do not curse the authors of your misfortune?"

"No, for fear our maledictions might make them suffer even worse than we do."

"And," continued the pale woman impas-sibly, "do you know the authors of this suf-fering of which you complain?"

Ethel thought a moment and said :

"All is done by the will of Heaven."

"Your father never speaks to you of the king?"

"The king? I pray for him morning and evening without even knowing him."

Ethel could not understand why the stranger bit her lips at this response.

"Does your father never, in his anger, name his implacable enemies, General Arens-dorf, Bishop Spollyson, and Chancellor d'Ahlefeld?"

"I do not know of whom you speak."

"And do you not know the name of Levin de Knud?"

The recollections of the scene of two days before, between the governor of Drontheim and Schumacker was too fresh in Ethel's mind for her to have forgotten the name of Levin de Knud.

"Levin de Knud?" said she; "it seems to me that that is the man for whom my father has so much esteem and even affec-tion."

"What!" cried the tall woman.

"Yes," continued the young girl. "It was Levin de Knud that my father defended so vigorously the day before yesterday against the governor of Drontheim."

These words redoubled the other's surprise.

"Against the governor of Drontheim! Do not play with me, girl. It is your interests that have brought me here. Your father took the part of General Levin de Knud against the governor of Drontheim?"

"Of the general! It seems to me it was a captain.—But no, you are right.—My father," continued Ethel, "seemed to have as much regard for this General Levin de Knud as he had hate for the governor of Drontheim."

"Here is another strange mystery!" said the tall pale woman to herself, who became more and more curious. "My dear child, what then passed between your father and the governor of Drontheim?"

The questioning tired Ethel, who looked steadily at the tall woman.

"Am I a criminal that you question me thus?"

At this the unknown seemed disconcerted, as though she felt that she had made a mistake. She continued, however, in a voice slightly trembling.

"You would not speak to me thus if you knew from whom and why I come."

"What!" said Ethel, "you come from him? Do you bring me a message from him?"

And a blush spread over her face; and her heart swelled in her breast, fluttering with impatience and anxiety.

"From whom?" asked the other.

The girl stopped at the very moment she was about to pronounce the name of her adored one. She had noticed in the eye of the stranger a gleam of sinister joy like a flash from hell. She said sadly:

"You do not know he of whom I would speak."

The expression of foiled spite for a second time appeared in the face of the other.

"Poor girl!" she cried, "what can I do for you?"

Ethel did not hear her. Her thoughts were beyond the mountains of the North, with the adventurous traveler. Her head was bowed on her breast and her hands were clasped beside it.

"Does your father hope to leave this prison?"

This question, repeated twice by the unknown, brought Ethel to herself.

"Yes," said she.

And tears welled in her eyes.

Those of the stranger sparkled at the response.

"He hopes to! tell me! and how! By what means! When!"

"He hopes to leave this prison, because he hopes to leave this life."

There is sometimes in the simplicity of a soft answer a force that vanquishes all the nerves of a heart hardened in wickedness. Something seemed to have touched the fine lady, for her expression suddenly changed, and, placing her cold hand on Ethel's arm, she said:

"Listen to me," said she in a tone almost frank; "have you heard that your father's days are again menaced by judicial trial? That he is suspected of having fermented a revolt among the miners of the North?"

The words "revolt" and "trial" had no meaning to Ethel; she turned her large dark eyes toward the unknown:

"What do you mean?"

"That your father is conspiring against the State; that his crime is almost discovered; that this crime entails the pain of death."

"Death! crime!" cried the poor child.

"Crime and death," said the strange woman gravely.

"My father! My noble father!" continued Ethel.

"Alas ! he who passes his days in listening to me reading the Edda and the Evangelists ! He, conspire ! What has he done to you?"

"Do not look upon me so ; I repeat to you, I am far from being your enemy. Your father is suspected of a great crime, I warn you. Perhaps, instead of these evidences of hatred, I should have the right to gratitude."

This reproach touched Ethel.

"Oh ! pardon, noble lady ! Pardon ! Until now the only human beings we have seen have been our enemies. I have been defiant toward you ; you will pardon me for it, will you not?"

The stranger smiled.

"What ! my daughter ! Can it be true that until to-day you have never met a friend?"

A hot blush flamed in Ethel's cheeks. She hesitated a moment.

"Yes—God knows the truth. We have found a friend, noble lady, one only!"

"Only one!" said the tall woman precipitately. "Tell me his name, for Heaven's sake, you do not know how important it is. It is for your father's welfare. Who is this friend?"

"I do not know," said Ethel.

The unknown grew pale.

"Is it because I wish to serve you that you play with me? Remember that it concerns

the life of your father. Tell me, who is the friend of whom you speak?"

"Heaven knows, noble lady, that all I know of him is his name, which is Ordener."

Ethel pronounced these words with the diffidence with which one pronounces before others the name of one's love.

"Ordener! Ordener!" repeated the unknown with strange emotion, whilst her hands nervously played with the edge of her white veil. "And what is the name of his father?" she asked in a troubled voice.

"I do not know," answered the young girl. "What matters his family or his father! This Ordener, noble lady, is the most generous of men."

Alas! The accent in which this was spoken gave up Ethel's secret to the penetration of the stranger.

The stranger became calm and composed, and, without taking her eyes from the young girl, asked:

"Have you heard tell of the approaching marriage of the son of the viceroy with the daughter of the present grand chancellor, d'Ahlefeld?"

She had to repeat this question in order to bring to Ethel's mind things which did not seem to interest her.

"I believe so," was her only answer.

Her calmness, her indifferent air seemed to surprise the unknown.

"Well; and what do you think of this marriage?"

It was impossible to perceive the least alteration in Ethel's large eyes, whilst she answered :

"Truly, nothing. May their union be happy!"

"The Counts Guldenlew and d'Ahlefeld, fathers of the betrothed, are great enemies of your father."

"Then," repeated Ethel softly, "may the union of their children be happy!"

"An idea occurs to me," continued the astute unknown; "if your father's life is menaced, you might be able, on the occasion of this great marriage, to obtain his pardon from the son of the viceroy."

"May the saints reward you for all your kind interest in us, noble lady; but how could I get my prayer to the viceroy's son?"

These words were spoken with so much good faith that a gesture of astonishment escaped from the stranger.

"What! Do you not know him?"

"That powerful lord!" cried Ethel. "You forget that I have never yet crossed the threshold of this fortress."

"True indeed," murmured the tall woman, under her breath; "what did the old fool Levin tell me? She does not know him." Then raising her voice: "Not impossible, however, you must have seen the son of the viceroy, he has been here."

"That may be, noble lady; of all the men who have come here I have never seen any but he, my Ordener."

"Your Ordener!" interrupted the unknown. She continued without appearing to notice Ethel's blushes: "Do you not know a young man with noble features, graceful height, step sure and grave? His eyes are kindly and austere, his complexion as fresh as that of a young girl, his hair chestnut-brown."

"Oh!" cried poor Ethel, "it is he, my betrothed, my adored Ordener! Tell me, noble and dear lady, do you bring me some news of him? Where have you met him? He has told you that he deigns to love me, has he not? He has told you that he has all my love? Alas! an unhappy prisoner has nothing else than love. What a noble friend! Only a week ago, I saw him in this very place, with his green cloak, under which beat his generous heart, and the black plume which swung so gracefully over his fine forehead."

She did not finish. She saw the tall unknown woman grow pale and then red, and heard her cry in a thundering voice:

“Unhappy one! You love Ordener Guldenlew, the betrothed of Ulrica d’Ahlefeld, the son of your father’s mortal enemy, the viceroy of Norway!”

Ethel fell fainting.



Henri Le Fort sc



XXXVII.

CAUPOLICAN.—March with such precaution that the earth itself will not hear the noise of your footsteps. . . . Redouble your carefulness, my friends. . . . If we arrive without being heard, I warrant you a victory.

TUCAPEL.—Night has covered everything with her wings ; a frightful darkness envelopes the earth. We do not hear a single sentinel, we have not seen a single spy.

RINGO.—Advance !

TUCAPEL.—What do I hear ? Are we discovered ?

LOPE DE VEGA—*l'Araque dompté.*

“ Tell me, Guldon Stayper, old comrade, do you know that the evening breeze begins to beat the hair of my cap smartly on my face ? ”

It was Kennybol, who, taking his gaze for a moment from the giant who marched at the head of the rebels, half turned towards one of the mountaineers whom a bend in the path had brought near him.

The latter nodded, and changed his banner from one shoulder to another, with a great

sigh. “Hum! I believe, captain, that in this cursed gorge of Black Post, where the wind rushes like a torrent, we are to have nothing warmer than a fire in a brazier.”

“We can only have such a fire lest the old owls up in the rocks be wakened. I do not like owls; the horrible night when I saw the fairy Ubfem, she had the form of an owl.”

“By Saint Sylvestre!” interrupted Guldon Stayper turning his head, “the angel of the wind is giving us hard blows with his wing to-night! If they follow my advice, Captain Kennybol, they will burn all the fir trees on the mountain. Besides, it would be a fine thing to see an army making war with a mountain.”

“God forbid, my dear Guldon! Think of the roebucks! the falcons! and the pheasants! It is well enough to cook the game; but not to burn it.”

Old Guldon began to laugh.

“Our captain is still always the same demon Kennybol, a wolf to the roebucks, a bear to the wolves, and a buffalo to the bears!”

“Are we still far from Black Post?” asked a voice among the hunters.

“Comrade,” answered Kennybol, “we will enter the gorge at nightfall; just now we are at the Four Crosses.”

There was a moment of silence, whilst nothing was heard but the tramp of feet, the moaning of the breeze, and the distant chant of the band of Smiasen iron-workers.

"Friend Guldon Stayper," continued Kennybol, after whistling an air of the huntsman Rollon, "you have just spent some days at Drontheim?"

"Yes, captain; our brother Georges Stayper was ill, and I took his place in his boat, so that his poor family might not die of hunger while he was dying of disease."

"And whilst you were at Drontheim did you have a chance to see the count, the prisoner—Schumacker—Gleffenhem—what is his name anyhow? At any rate, the man in whose name we rebel against the royal tax, and whose arms you bear embroidered on the large scarlet banner you carry?"

"It is heavy enough!" said Guldon. "You want to speak of the prisoner of Munckholm castle, the count?—so be it. And how do you expect, my brave captain, that I was to see him? I would have to have," said he, lowering his voice, "eyes like this demon's who marches in front of us, without, however, leaving behind the odor of sulphur that he does; eyes like this Han of Iceland who sees through walls, or the key of Queen Mab which opens all locks. There is among us now, I

am sure, only a single man who has seen the count—the prisoner of whom you speak."

"Only one? Ah! Master Hacket? But Hacket is no longer with us. He left us tonight to return . . ."

"It is not Master Hacket that I mean, captain."

"And who then?"

"The young man with the green cloak and black feather, who fell among us last night."

"Well?"

"Well!" said Guldon, nearing Kennybol, "it is he who knows the count—this famous count, indeed, as well as I know you, Captain Kennybol."

Kennybol looked at Guldon, winked his left eye and snapped his teeth, then slapping him on the shoulder gave vent to the triumphant exclamation which expresses our self-esteem when we are satisfied with our penetrations:

"I thought so!"

"Yes, captain," continued Guldon Stayper, changing the scarlet standard to his other shoulder, "I am sure that the young man with the green cloak has seen the count—I don't know his name, but the one we are going to fight for—in the donjon at Munckholm, and he seemed to attach no more

importance to entering the prison, than you or I would in entering a royal reserve."

"And how do you know that, brother Guldon?"

The old mountaineer seized Kennybol's arm, then, half-opening his otter skin with a precaution almost suspicious, said: "Look!"

"By my most holy patron!" cried Kennybol, "that shines like a diamond!"

It was indeed a rich diamond buckle, attached to Guldon Stayper's coarse belt.

"And it is true that they are diamonds," he continued, dropping the skirt of his coat, "it is as true as it is true that the moon is two days' march from the earth, and that the leather of my belt is made of the skin of a dead buffalo."

But Kennybol's face clouded, and had changed from astonishment to severity. He stared at the ground as he said, with a sort of savage solemnity:

"Guldon Stayper, of the village of Chol-Sœ, in the mountains of Kole, your father, Medprath Stayper, died aged two hundred years, without reproach, for it is no wrong to accidentally kill a royal buck or an elk. Guldon Stayper, you have on your gray head fifty-seven good years, which is only young for an owl. Guldon Stayper, comrade, I would much rather, for your sake, see the

diamonds of that buckle turned to grains of sand, if you did not come by it fairly,—as fairly as a royal pheasant gets a lead musket ball."

In the delivery of this singular admonition there was something in the chief's voice that smacked of warning and forgiveness.

"As true as Captain Kennybol is the most daring hunter in Kole," answered Guldon without emotion, "and as true that these diamonds are diamonds, I came by them fairly."

"Truly?" answered Kennybol in the voice of mingled confidence and doubt.

"God and my patron saint know," replied Guldon, "that one evening, when I had just directed some people who were carrying the body of an officer found on the Sands of Urchtal, the way to the Spladgest of Drontheim, about a week ago, a young man came to my boat, and said: 'To Munckholm!'—I did not care over much about going, captain, you know a bird does not willingly fly into a cage. However, the young man seemed to have such an air of importance, he was followed by a groom who led two horses, and he spoke with such an air of authority, that I took up my oars, that is to say, my brother's oars. My good angel had willed it. On arrival, the young passenger,

after having spoken to the sergeant, who no doubt commanded the fortress, threw to me as payment — as God is my witness! — the diamond buckle which I have just shown to you, and which would have belonged to my brother George, and not to me, if, at that moment, the traveler — Heaven preserve him! — had not engaged me to make the journey which George would have made. That is the truth, Captain Kennybol."

"Good."

Gradually the chief's face recovered all the serenity which it, naturally hard and severe, could, and he asked Guldon, in a cheerful voice:

"And you are sure, old comrade, that this young man was the same one who is now behind us with Norbith?"

"Sure. I am not likely to forget, even among a thousand, the face of he who has made my fortune. Besides, it is the same cloak, the same black feather."

"I believe you, Guldon."

"It is clear that he went to see the famous prisoner; for if it had not been for some great mystery, he would not have paid the ferryman so well; besides, he is now among us . . ."

"You are right."

"And I imagine, captain, that the young stranger has more of the confidence of the

count than Master Hacket, who only seems of use, upon my soul, to howl like a wild cat."

Kennybol nodded his head expressively.

"Comrade, you have said just what I was about to say. I would much rather, in this business, obey this young stranger than the envoy Hacket. May Saint Sylvestre and Saint Olaüs help me, if I do not believe that we are more indebted to the unknown than to the braggart Hacket for the aid of the Icelandic demon who leads us."

"Truly, captain?" asked Guldon.

Kennybol opened his mouth to answer, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Norbith.

"Kennybol, we are betrayed! Gormon Woëstroem has just come from the south. The entire musketeer regiment is marching against us. The uhlans of Sleswig are at Sparbo; three companies of Danish horse dragoons are at the village of Lœvig. All along the road he saw more green jackets than bushes. We must hasten to capture Skongen; and must not stop until we get there. There, at least, we will be able to make a stand. Gormon thinks he even saw muskets glittering in the shrubbery along the gorges of Black Post."

The young chief was pale and excited, but his looks and tone of voice showed that he still retained his courage and daring.

"Impossible!" cried Kennybol.

"Certain! Certain!" said Norbith.

"But Master Hacket . . ."

"Is a traitor or a coward. Mind what I say, comrade Kennybol. Where is he, this Hacket?"

At this moment old Jonas hailed the two chiefs. Discouragement was in his features, and it was easy to see that he knew the fatal news.

The glances of the two old men, Jonas and Kennybol, met, and they began to wag their heads.

"Well! Jonas? Well! Kennybol?" said Norbith.

The old chief of the Faroe miners passed his hand slowly across his rugged brow, and answered in a low voice:

"Yes, it is too true, it is surely so. Gormon Woëstroem has seen them."

"If it is so," said Kennybol, "what will we do?"

"What will we do?" repeated Jonas.

"I advise, comrade Jonas, that we will do well to halt."

"And it would be still wiser, brother Kennybol, to retreat."

"To halt! To retreat!" cried Norbith.

"We must advance!"

The two old men turn cold and suspicious glances towards the younger.

"Advance!" said Kennybol. "And what about the musketeers of Munckholm?"

"And the Sleswig uhlans?" added Jonas.

"And the Danish dragoons?" continued Kennybol.

Norbith stamped his foot.

"And the royal tax? And my mother, who is dying of hunger and cold?"

"The devil! The royal tax!" said the miner Jonas with a sort of groan.

"What of it?" said the mountaineer Kennybol.

Jonas took Kennybol by the hand.

"Companion, you are a hunter, and have not the honor of being a ward of our glorious sovereign Christian IV. May the sainted King Olaüs, who is in heaven, deliver us from the tax!"

"Ask that favor of your sabre!" said Norbith in a savage voice.

"These daring words cost a young man little, comrade Norbith," answered Kennybol; "but think, if we advance, all these green jackets . . ."

"It would be a fine thing for us to return to the mountains like foxes before wolves; they know our names and of our revolt; and, if we must die, I would rather have a musket ball than a gibbet rope."

Jonas nodded approvingly.

"The devil ! The tax for our brothers ! and the gibbet for us ! Norbith is certainly right."

"Give me your hand, brave Norbith," said Kennybol, "there is danger both ways. It is better to march straight to the precipice than to fall over backwards."

"Forward ! Forward then !" cried old Jonas rattling his sabre.

Norbith grasped their hands eagerly.

"Brothers, listen ! Be as daring as I am and I will be as prudent as you. We will not halt until we arrive at Skongen ; the garrison is feeble and we will overwhelm it. Since we must do so we will pass through the gorges of the Black Post, but in perfect silence. We must pass, even if the enemy are there on guard."

"I hardly think the musketeers can have reached the bridge of Oedals, near Skongen, but what does it matter. Silence !"

"Silence ! So be it," repeated Kennybol.

"Meanwhile, Jonas," continued Norbith, "we will return to our posts. To-morrow, perhaps, we will be at Drontheim, in spite of the musketeers, the uhlans, the dragoons and all the green jackets of the south."

The three chiefs separated. Soon the password, *Silence !* passed from rank to rank, and this band of rebels, a moment before so noisy, became, in the rapidly increasing night, like

a troop of mute phantoms, wandering noiselessly about a cemetery.

Meanwhile the road they were following became narrower, and hemmed in on all sides by tall rocks, which became steeper and steeper. Just as the ruddy moon rose from a mass of rugged clouds, Kennybol leaned towards Guldon Stayper and said :

"We are about to enter the defile of the Black Post."

Indeed, the noise of the torrent which wound its way between the two mountains was already heard, and in the midst could be seen the enormous oblong pyramid of granite, called the Black Post, standing out against the gray of the sky and the white of the snow on distant mountains, whilst the west, covered with underbrush, was bounded by the forest of Sparbo and a long amphitheatre of rocks, arranged like a giant staircase.

The rebels, forced to lengthen out their columns in the winding path between the two mountains, continued their march. They entered the gorges without torches and without noise. The sound of their footsteps was even drowned in the crash of the cascades and the moaning of the wind as it ploughed through the Druidical forests covered with ice and snow. Lost in the dark depths of the defile the moonlight did not reach the

iron of their weapons, and the white eagles which circled above did not notice that a great multitude of men disturbed these solitudes.

Once old Guldon Stayper touched Kennybol on the shoulder with the butt end of his carbine :

“ Captain ! captain ! I see something behind that clump of shrubs.”

“ So do I,” answered the chief mountaineer, “ it is the waters of the torrent reflecting the clouds.”

And they passed on.

Another time Guldon roughly stopped his chief.

“ Look,” said he, “ are not these musket-barrels up there in the shadow of that rock ?”

Kennybol shook his head, then after a moment’s reflection : “ Calm yourself, brother Guldon. It is only moonlight falling on an icicle.”

Nothing to alarm them happened, and the different bands, peaceably following the windings of the defile, soon forgot all the dangers which their position offered.

After two hours of difficult marching through trunks of trees and blocks of granite with which the road was obstructed, the advance guard entered the clump of firs which ended the gorge of Black Post,

above which hung dark and forbidding rocks.

Guldon Stayper approached Kennybol, vowing that he was glad to at last be about to leave this cursed gorge, and that he must give thanks to Saint Sylvestre that the Black Post had not been fatal to them.

Kennybol began to laugh, swearing that he never had any old wife's fears; for, with most men, when peril is past, it no longer exists, and they then seek to prove the courage which they had not then been able to show.

At this moment, two little round balls of fire, like two burning coals, moving in the darkness, attracted their attention.

"Bless my soul!" said he in a low voice, grasping Guldon's arm, "there, certainly, are two fiery eyes which should belong to the finest wild cat that ever howled in a thicket."

"You are right," answered old Stayper, "and, if he was not marching in front of us, I would say they were the eyes of that cursed demon of Icel . . ."

"Ssch!" cried Kennybol.

Then, seizing his carbine:

"Truly," continued he, "it will never be said that such a fine shot was allowed to escape Kennybol."

The shot was made before Guldon Stayper, who grasped the arm of the imprudent huntsman was able to stop him. It was not a cry of a wild cat which rang out with the report of the carbine, but a frightful roar of a tiger, followed by a human laugh, more horrible still.

The shot did not die away, echo by echo, in the mountains, for the flash of the carbine had hardly gleamed in the darkness, the noise of the fatal shot had hardly broken the silence, when a multitude of formidable unexpected voices were heard in the mountains, in the gorges, and in the forests, crying, *long live the king!* loud as thunder. The cry rolled above their heads, on either side, before them and behind them. And when the terrible rattle of the musketry, on all sides, struck them and enlightened them at the same time, they saw, amidst the clouds of smoke, a battalion behind each rock, and a soldier behind each tree.

XXXVIII.

To arms ! to arms ! Captains !

Le Captif d' Ochali.

Let us go back to beginning of the day just finished, and return to Skongen, where, whilst the insurgents were leaving the lead mine of Apsyl-Corh, the musketeer regiment, which we saw on the march in the thirtieth chapter of this true tale, had just arrived.

After having given several orders for the lodging of the soldiers of his command, Baron Vœthaün, colonel of the musketeers, was about to enter his hotel near the town gate, when he felt a heavy hand placed familiarly on his shoulder. The colonel turned about.

It was a short man, whose features were covered with a large straw hat, leaving only a red bushy beard in sight. He was carefully wrapped in the folds of a cloak of gray drugget, which, except that no hood could be seen, seemed to have been a hermit's robe, and which hid his hands encased in large gloves.

"Well, fellow !" asked the colonel irritably,
"what the devil do you want?"





"Colonel of the Munckholm musketeers," answered the man with a queer look, "follow me for a moment, I have news for you."

At this strange invitation the baron remained surprised and silent.

"Important news, colonel," repeated the man with the big gloves.

This insistence determined Baron Vœthaün. In the present crisis of the province, and on the mission he was on, no information was to be disdained. "Go on," said he.

The little man walked in front of him, and when they were outside the town he stopped: "Colonel, would you like to be able to exterminate all the rebels at a single blow?"

The colonel laughed:

"That would not be a bad way of beginning the campaign."

"Well! order all your soldiers to be placed to-day in ambuscade in the gorges of Black Post, two miles from this town; the bands will camp there to-night. At the first shot you hear open fire upon them. The victory will be easy."

"Fellow, the advice is good, and I thank you. But how do you know what you tell me?"

"If you knew me, colonel, you would not ask me how it could happen that I did not know."

"Who then are you?"

The man stamped his foot.

“I did not come here to tell you that.”

“Do not fear. Whoever you are the service you render me will be your safeguard. Perhaps you are one of the rebels !”

“I have refused to be one.”

“Then why conceal your name, since you are a faithful subject of the king ?”

“What matters it ?”

The colonel wished to get further information from this singular news-bearer.

“Tell me, is it true that these brigands are commanded by the famous Han of Iceland ?”

“Han of Iceland !” repeated the little man in an extraordinary voice.

The colonel repeated his question. A burst of laughter, which might have passed for a roar, was the only reply he could get. He asked several other questions about the number of the rebels and their chiefs ; the little man interrupted him :

“Colonel of the Munckholm musketeers, I have said all that I am going to say. Go into ambush with all your regiment in the defiles of Black Post, and you can crush all this mob of men.”

“You will not reveal to me who you are ; so you deprive yourself of the gratitude of the king ; but it is at least fair for Baron Voethaïn to show his gratitude for the service you have rendered him.”

The colonel threw his purse at the feet of the little man.

"Keep your gold, colonel," said he, "I have no need of it; and," added he, showing a large bag hung to his rope belt, "if you must have pay to kill these men I have yet, colonel, gold to give *you* in payment for their blood."

Before the colonel had recovered from the astonishment caused by the inexplicable words of this mysterious being, he had disappeared.

Baron Voethaün returned slowly, asking himself if he should follow the advice given by the man. As he was entering his hotel, he was given a letter sealed with the arms of the grand chancellor. It was indeed a message from Count d'Ahlefeld, in which the colonel found, with a surprise easy to conceive, the same news and the same counsel which he had just been given, at the town gates by the incomprehensible person with the straw hat and the great gloves.

XXXIX.

A hundred banners were bent forward over the heads of the valiant, and blood flowed round like water, and death was held better than flight. A Saxon bard had called it a feast of the swords—a gathering of the eagles to the prey—the clashing of bills upon shield and helmet, the shouting of battle more joyful than the clamor of a bridal.

SIR WALTER SCOTT—*Ivanhoe*.

We will not undertake to describe here the horrible confusion which broke up the already disordered columns of the rebels, when the fatal volleys suddenly showed all the ragged heights and dells bristling with unexpected enemies. It would be difficult to discover whether the loud shriek, formed of a thousand cries, which rose from their thunderstruck ranks, was a cry of despair, of terror, or of rage. The terrible fire poured upon them from all sides increased every moment; and, before they were able to return a shot after the fatal one of Kennybol's, they were surrounded by such a cloud of smoke that it was





almost impossible to make out any of the musketeers, dragoons, or uhlans, who were seen moving about, like devils in a furnace.

All the bands, spread out over a mile, on a winding and tortuous path, bordered on one side by a deep torrent and on the other by a wall of rocks, which prevented all attempts to double on themselves, resembled a serpent cut in pieces, the living part squirming in their gore, trying to re-unite themselves.

When the first surprise was over, despair seemed to animate, like a common spirit, all these naturally wild and fearless men. Furious at seeing themselves crushed without defense, this crowd of brigands set up a roar as though from a single body, a clamor which drowned for a moment all the noise of their triumphant enemies ; and when they saw themselves without leaders, disordered and almost without arms, they began, under a terrible fire, to climb the rocks, hanging on by their teeth and nails, over steep precipices, and swinging their hammers and iron clubs, the soldiers, so well armed, so well arranged and placed, who had not yet lost a single man, could not help an involuntary shudder of horror.

Several times some reached the summit, sometimes by bridges of the dead, sometimes by raising themselves on the shoulders of their

comrades, sticking to the rocks like snails, until they were face to face with their enemies ; but hardly had they time to cry : *Liberty !* hardly time to show their black faces, convulsed with rage, than they were thrown into the abyss, dragging with them their daring companions who were hanging on to some bushes or point of rock.

The efforts of these wretches to fly or to defend themselves were in vain ; all the exits of the defile were closed, all accessible points were bristling with soldiers. The most of the unfortunate rebels died biting the sand of the road, after having broken their cutlasses on a granite rock ; some folding their arms, and sitting on the stones which bordered the road, waited, silent and immovable, until a bullet threw them into the torrent. Those among whom Hacket had distributed muskets, sent some chance shots towards the caverns and rocks from which the volleys poured. A tumult of voices, among which could be heard the calm commands of the officers, mingled with the rattle of the discharges, whilst a bloody vapor arose from the place of battle, whilst the torrent, white with foam, passed like an enemy between the two armies carrying off her prey of dead bodies.

But, in the first part of the action, or rather the butchery, the mountaineers of Kole,

commanded by the brave and imprudent Kennybol, had suffered the most. It is remembered that they formed the advance guard of the rebel army, and that they were in the pine woods at the end of the defile when the action commenced. Hardly had the blundering Kennybol loaded his musket than the woods were suddenly full of enemies who surrounded them with a circle of fire ; whilst above them was the entire Munckholm regiment which poured upon them volley after volley of terrible musketry. In this horrible crisis, Kennybol, in despair, looked towards the mysterious giant, expecting at least an evidence of superhuman power, such as Han of Iceland was reputed to possess, but he did not see the formidable demon suddenly grow wings and fly above the combatants, pouring flames and thunderbolts upon the musketeers, neither did he see him grow to the height of the clouds and overturn a mountain on the assailants, nor stamp his foot upon the ground and thus open an abyss to swallow up the battalions in ambush. This formidable Han of Iceland recoiled just as he did at the first attack of the musketeers, and came to him with a troubled face, asking for a carbine, because, said he in an ordinary voice, at such a time his hatchet was as useless as an old wife's distaff.

Kennybol, still credulous, though somewhat astonished, gave him the musket, but with such trepidation that it almost over-powered his sense of fear of the shots all around. Still hoping for the prodigious, he expected the musket handled by Han of Iceland would become as large as a cannon, or turn into a winged dragon, shooting forth fire from its nose, eyes, and mouth. Imagine the sportsman's surprise when he saw the demon charge and fire his gun several times with less skill than he could have done himself. It was evidently useless to look for miracles; he must have recourse to ordinary means of help. His poor old comrade, Stayper, lay dead at his feet covered with wounds. The terrified mountaineers pressed one against another, little thinking by thus forming a mass they were a surer target for their enemies. Kennybol at once ordered them to disperse, to throw themselves into the nearest thicket, to conceal themselves in the brushwood, and return their enemies' fire. The mountaineers were mostly fairly armed, for they were all hunters, and they silently followed their chief's orders. In moments of danger men often lose their heads, and they willingly obey one who retains his presence of mind.

This wise measure was, however, far from assuring victory or even safety. Yet some

remained inactive, either leaning on their muskets, or lying by the side of the wounded, to meet death without firing a shot in self-defense. It may seem strange that men accustomed to hunt wild beasts should so soon lose courage, but one thing is certain, courage in some minds springs from habit, and the one who boldly faces shot will often tremble at darkness or the verge of a precipice, while others, who will attack a wild beast, or take an abyss at a bound, will fly before a salvo of artillery. It often happens that fearlessness is only habitual, and that having ceased to fear death in any form, one does not dread it.

Kennybol was surrounded by his dying comrades, although himself but slightly wounded in the left arm, while the diabolical giant simply acted as a musketeer. All at once there was evidently great confusion on the heights among the victorious troops, followed by cries of distress and agony, mingled with curses, certainly not caused by the mountaineers, who could do but little damage. Firing ceased, the smoke cleared sufficiently to show that immense blocks were rapidly falling in the midst of the soldiers, who fled in all directions down the rocks.

At this unexpected help, Kennybol turned his head ;—the giant was still with them. The mountaineer was astonished, for he

expected to find that the giant, Han of Iceland, had taken flight over the rocks, and sent these huge masses down on his enemies ; but the giant was still there. It could not be the rebels, for no arms were visible, nor could any shouts of victory be heard.

Meanwhile the fire from the plateau had entirely ceased ; the woods hid the remainder of the battalion which rallied there. The rattle of the musketry died away. Kennybol, as chief, profited by this un hoped-for aid, he gathered together his companions, and showed them the heaps of dead caused by the fall of the rocks, which continued at intervals. Then the mountaineers answered the moans of their enemies by shouts of victory ; they formed into a column, and, although slightly inconvenienced by the dying fire from the bushes, they resolved, full of new courage, to yet win their way out of the dismal defile.

The column thus formed was about to charge ; Kennybol had already given the signal with his trumpet, amid shouts of *Liberty! Liberty! No more tax!* when the sound of drum and cornet, sounding the charge was heard in front of them, when the battalions, reinforced by fresh soldiers appeared at a turn in the road, presenting a front bristling with pikes and bayonets. When they arrived in front of Kennybol's

columns, they halted and he who seemed to be the commander, advanced towards the mountaineers, waving a little white flag and escorted by a trumpeter.

The unexpected appearance of this troop did not disconcert Kennybol in the least. There is a point in the feeling of danger, where surprise and fear are impossible. At the first sound of the drum and cornet the old fox of Kole had stopped his companions. At the moment when the battalion appeared, he ordered all the carbines loaded and commanded the mountaineers to stand two abreast so as to present the least possible surface to the fire of the enemy. He placed himself in front, with the giant, with whom, in the heat of the fight, he had become almost familiar, having noticed that his eyes were not quite as blazing as the furnace of a forge and that his supposed claws were only long finger-nails.

When he saw the commander of the royal musketeers advance towards him as though he were going to surrender, and the firing suddenly stop, he suspended his preparations for defense.

Meanwhile the officer with the white flag arrived in the middle of the space between the two columns; he stopped, and the trumpeter who accompanied him sounded the call. Then the officer cried in a loud voice,

which the mountaineers distinctly heard despite the noise of the fight which was still kept up behind them.

"In the name of the king! The king's pardon is granted to those who throw down their arms, and give up their leaders to the sovereign justice of his majesty!"

The bearer of the flag of truce had hardly pronounced these words when a shot was heard from a neighboring coppice. The officer staggered, stepped back waving his flag and fell, crying: "Treason!"

No one knew who fired the fatal shot.

"Treason! Cowardice!" repeated the battalion of musketeers with roars of rage.

And a horrible volley of musketry terrified the mountaineers.

"Treason!" replied the mountaineers in their turn, furious at seeing their brothers fall at their sides. And a general firing answered the unexpected attack of the royal soldiers.

"Upon them! Comrades! Death to the cowards! Death!" cried the officers of the musketeers.

"Death! Death!" repeated the mountaineers, and the combatants bared their sabres and the two columns sprang forward, meeting almost on the body of the unfortunate officer, with shouts and horrible noise of arms.

The ranks mingled. Rebel chiefs, royal officers, soldiers, mountaineers; all, pellmell, striking, seizing, grasping each other, like two troops of fierce tigers meeting in a desert. The long pikes, the bayonets, and the halberds were useless; sabres and hatchets glittered above the heads; and many combatants, struggling in each other's grasp, could not use any other arms than poniards or their teeth.

An equal fury and indignation animated the mountaineers and the musketeers; the same cry of *Treason!* and *Vengeance!* rose from all. The mêlée had got to the point where ferocity enters every heart, where one prefers the death of an unknown enemy to his own life, where one tramples upon the heads of the dead and wounded; among the latter, one sometimes revives enough to bite those who trample him under foot.

It was at this moment that a little man, who, some of the combatants, seeing him at first through the smoke, in his wild beasts' skins, took for a wild animal, threw himself into their midst with horrible laughs and yells of joy.

No one knew whence he came. His stone hatchet fell with equal force on a rebel or a soldier. If he made a choice, it was in more freely crushing a Munckholm musketeer. All

fled before him. He brandished his terrible hatchet on all sides, scattering fragments of flesh, severed limbs, and broken bones. He, too, cried "*Vengeance!*" and added strange words, among which the name of Gill often occurred. To this formidable being the slaughter appeared a holiday.

A mountaineer upon whom his murderous glance fell ran and threw himself at the feet of the giant in whom Kennybol had placed so many shattered hopes, crying :

“ Han of Iceland, save me ! ”

“ Han of Iceland ! ” repeated the little man.

He advanced towards the giant.

“ Are you Han of Iceland ? ” said he.

The giant by way of answer raised his iron hatchet. The little man stepped back and the weapon, in its descent, imbedded itself in the skull of the very wretch who implored the giant’s aid.

“ Ho ! ho ! By Ingulphus ! I thought Han of Iceland was more adept.”

“ It is thus Han of Iceland saves those who implore him ! ” said the giant.

“ You are right.”

The two formidable champions attacked each other in rage. The iron hatchet and the stone hatchet met ; they clashed violently and the two weapons broke into a thousand pieces.

Quicker than thought, the little man seized a heavy wooden club, left on the earth by one of the dying, and, avoiding the giant, who tried to seize him in his arms, he aimed a terrible two-handed blow and struck his colossal adversary a furious blow on the forehead.

The giant gave a muffled cry and fell. The triumphant little man kicked the body aside, overflowing with joy.

"You took a name much too heavy for you," said he.

And, brandishing his victorious club, he went to seek other victims.

The giant was not dead. The violence of the blow had stunned him, and he was almost lifeless. He was beginning to recover and to make some feeble movements when he was noticed by a musketeer, who threw himself upon him, crying :

"Han of Iceland is captured ! Victory!"

"Han of Iceland is captured !" repeated all voices in accents of triumph or distress.

The little man had disappeared.

The mountaineers had already been outnumbered for some time ; for the Munckholm musketeers had been reinforced by the detachments of dismounted uhlans and dragoons who had arrived from the interior of the gorges where the surrender of the principal chiefs had stopped the carnage. Brave

Kennybol, wounded in the beginning of the action, had been taken prisoner. The capture of Han of Iceland destroyed the remaining courage of the mountaineers. They threw down their arms.

When the first gleam of day lighted up the summits of the high glaciers, still half submerged in shadow, there remained in the defiles of Black Post only mournful repose, nothing but a frightful silence, sometimes broken by groans and the low moaning of the morning breeze. Black clouds of ravens flew towards the fatal gorge from all parts of the compass; and some poor shepherds, having passed with their flocks, returned horror-stricken to their huts vowing that they had seen a beast with a human face, drinking blood, and seated on a heap of bodies in the defile of the Black Post.

XL.

Let those who wish suffer under these secret fires.

BRANTÔME.

“ Daughter, open the window ; the glass is very dull. I would like to see daylight for a little while.”

“ See daylight, father ? Night is rapidly approaching.”

“ There are still some rays of the sun above the hills about the gulf. I need to breathe the free air through the bars of my cell.—The sky is so clear.”

“ Father, a storm is gathering behind the horizon.”

“ A storm, Ethel ! Where do you see it ?”

“ It is because the sky is so clear, father, that I expect a storm.”

The old man looked at the young girl in surprise.

“ If I had thought of that in my youth I would not have been here.”

Then he added in a less bitter tone :

" What you say is right, but is beyond your years. I do not understand how your youth knows what experience teaches my old age."

Ethel kissed his eyes, as though troubled by this grave and simple reflection. He clasped her hands sadly, and a deep sigh rose from her breast.

" My daughter," said the old captive, " for some days you have been as pale as though life had never warmed the blood in your veins. For several mornings you have greeted me with eyelids red and swollen, and eyes heavy with weeping. Several days, Ethel, have passed in silence, without your voice trying to make me forget the sombre thoughts of my fate. You are sadder than I am, whilst you have not, like me, the sadness of a wasted life upon your mind. Affliction surrounds your life but cannot enter your heart. The morning clouds soon disperse. You are at the period of life when one can live in dreams of the future independent of the present, whatever it be. What is the matter, then, my daughter? Thanks to this monotonous captivity you are sheltered from unforeseen misfortunes. What fault have you committed? I cannot believe that it is for me you grieve; you should have become accustomed to my irredeemable misfortune. Hope, indeed, is

no longer in my path ; but that is no reason why I should read despair in your eyes.”

In speaking thus the usually severe voice of the prisoner had become almost paternal. Ethel, mute, remained standing before him. Suddenly, with an almost convulsive movement, she threw herself on the stone at his feet and hid her face in her hands, as though to hide her tears and smother the sobs which burst from her breast.

Deep sorrow filled the young girl’s heart. What had she done to the fatal stranger that she had revealed the secret which destroyed all her life ? Alas ! Since the entire name of her Ordener was made known to her, the poor child had been unable to sleep or have any peace of mind. At night she had no other solace than that of being able to weep freely. So it had come to this ! He was not for her, she to whom he belonged by all right, by all sorrow, and by all prayers ; he who she believed she was to wed. For the very evening Ordener pressed her in his arms seemed now but a dream, which had repeated itself each night since he left. It was then a guilty feeling to think of the absent one. Her Ordener was affianced to another. What words can depict all she endured, tortured with jealousy, as she lay tossing to and fro during the long hours of the night, picturing her Ordener, perhaps

in the arms of another, wealthy, noble, and more beautiful than herself. “ How could I fancy,” murmured she, “ that he would risk death for my sake ? Ordener, a great lord, the viceroy’s son ; I nothing but a poor prisoner, the despised daughter of an outlaw. He has gone, he is free, and has, no doubt, left me, to wed his beautiful betrothed, the daughter of a chancellor, a minister, a proud count ! So he deceived me ! my Ordener ! Oh, God ! who could believe that that voice could deceive ? ”

The wretched Ethel wept unceasingly. Ordener was ever before her eyes ; he was her god, although going to the altar with that smile for another which had been her great happiness.

The poor girl had made every effort to conceal her grief from her father. Tears that are shed are far less bitter than those which are smothered. It was some days before the old man perceived the change in his daughter, and his gentle questioning had caused her heart to overflow with grief.

The father looked at his weeping daughter for some time, with a bitter smile, and shook his head.

“ Ethel,” said he at last, “ you who never loved a man, why do you weep ? ”

He had hardly finished when the noble and gentle creature rose. She had by some

unknown powers, stopped the tears in her eyes, which she wiped with her sash.

"Father," said she firmly, "my lord and father, pardon me; it was a moment of weakness."

Then she looked up at him with a forced smile. She went to the end of the room to look for the Edda and came and seated herself near her taciturn father and opened the book at hazard. Then, calming her emotion, she began to read; but her reading was unheard, either by herself or by the old man.

The latter stopped her with a gesture.

"Enough, my daughter, enough."

She closed the book.

"Ethel," added Schumacker, "do you still sometimes think of Ordener?"

The girl interrupted him, trembling.

"Yes," continued he, "of Ordener, who went . . ."

"My lord and father," interrupted Ethel, "why worry ourselves about him? I think, as you do, that he has gone never to return."

"Never to return, my daughter! I could not have said that. Some presentiment tells me, on the contrary, that he will come back."

"Such was not your opinion, my noble father, when you spoke so doubtfully of the young man."

"Did I speak doubtfully?"

"Yes, father, and I am quite of your opinion; I think that he deceived us."

"Deceived us, my daughter! If I had judged him so, I acted like all men who condemn without proof. I received from Ordener nothing but proofs of devotion."

"And do you know, my venerable father, that his cordial words did not hide perfidious thoughts?"

"Ordinarily, men do not court those in misfortune and disgrace. If Ordener was not attached to me he would not then have come to my prison without an object."

"And are you sure," answered Ethel in a weak voice, "that in coming he did not have an object?"

"And what could it be?" asked the old man briskly.

It was too much of an effort for her to continue to accuse the well-beloved Ordener, whom she formerly defended against her father.

"I am no longer Count Griffenfeld," continued he. "I am no longer grand chancellor of Denmark and Norway, the favored dispensator of royal pardons, the all-powerful minister. I am a miserable prisoner of State, an outlaw, a pestiferous politician. It needs courage to speak of me without execration among all the men who I have loaded with

honors and riches ; it is devotion to cross the threshold of my cell, if one is not a jailer or a headsman ; it is a heroism, my daughter, not to cross one's self when calling me friend. No, I will not be ungrateful like all the human race. This young man has merited my gratitude, if only for showing me a cheerful face and letting me hear a consolatory voice."

Ethel hardly listened to these words, which would have ravished her a few days sooner, when Ordener was still in her heart, her Ordener. The old man, after having paused a moment, continued in a solemn voice :

"Listen to me, my daughter, for I am going to speak gravely. I feel myself dying slowly ; life leaves me little by little ; yes, my daughter, my end is approaching."

Ethel interrupted him by a smothered moan.

"O God, father, do not speak so ! For pity's sake, spare your poor daughter ! Alas ! are you also going to abandon her ? What will become of her, alone in the world, without your protection ?"

"An outlaw's protection !" replied her father, shaking his head. "That is what I have been thinking about. Your future happiness concerns me far more than my past misfortunes. Listen then, and do not interrupt me. Ordener does not deserve to be judged so severely. Until now I had no idea

you held him in such aversion. He looks both frank and noble. That proves nothing. But he is not without some good points. Yet he would not be a man if he were not steeped in every vice and every crime. There is never smoke without fire!"

The old man paused again, and, fixing his eyes upon his daughter, he added :

"Feeling the near approach of death, I have thought much about him and you, Ethel. Should he return, as I fully hope may be the case, I will make him your protector and your husband."

Ethel trembled and turned pale. It was at the very time her dream of happiness had vanished forever that her father tried to compass its fulfilment. The bitter thought recurred to her, "It might have been." The girl could not speak, lest the burning tears should fall.

The father waited.

"What!" said she at last in a strained voice, "you have chosen a husband for me, my lord and father, without knowing his family, his name?"

"I have not chosen, my daughter, I am choosing."

His voice was almost imperious : Ethel sighed.

" . . . I do select him for you. What do I care about his birth? I do not want to know

anything of his family, since I am acquainted with himself. Think well of this; it is the only anchor on which you may hope to trust. Fortunately he has not the same dislike toward you that you evince toward him."

The poor girl raised her eyes to heaven.

"Hear me, Ethel; I repeat it, what does his birth matter? He is doubtless of obscure rank, for those born in prisons are not accustomed to frequenting prisons. Yes, and do not show proud regrets, my daughter; do not forget that Ethel Schumacker is no longer Princess Wollin and Countess of Tongsberg; you have descended to the point from which your father rose. Be then happy if this man accepts your hand, no matter what his family may be. If of humble birth, so much the better; you will then at least be protected from the troubles which have beset your father's life. By changing your name you will be free from envy and hatred; your very existence will soon be ignored, and your life will end far better than it has commenced."

Ethel had fallen on her knees before the prisoner.

"O father! spare me!"

He opened his eyes in surprise.

"What do you mean, child?"

"In the name of Heaven, do not picture this happiness, it is not for me!"

"Ethel," said the old man, severely, "do not trifle with fate. I refused the hand of a royal princess—do you hear me?—a princess of Holstein-Augustenburg! My pride has been cruelly punished. You disdain a loyal-hearted man because he is of obscure origin. Tremble lest your chastisement should not be as heavy as mine."

"Would to Heaven," murmured Ethel, "that this man were obscure and loyal!"

The old man rose and paced the apartment much agitated.

"My daughter," said he, "it is your poor father who begs you and commands you. Do not, at death, leave him anxious for your future; promise to accept this stranger for a husband."

"I will obey you always, father, but do not hope for his return."

"I have weighed the chances, and I think, considering the accent with which Ordener pronounced your name . . ."

"That he loves me?" interrupted Ethel, bitterly; "oh! no, I think not."

The father continued coldly:

"I do not know, to use your girlish expression, whether he loves you; but I know he will return."

"Abandon that idea, noble father. Besides, perhaps you would not wish him for your son-in-law if you knew him."

"Ethel, he will be, whatever his name and rank."

"Well!" continued she, "if this young man, in whom you have seen a consoler, in whom you see a protector for your daughter, my lord and father, was the son of one of your mortal enemies, of the viceroy of Norway, of Count Guldenlew?"

Schumacker sprang up.

"What do you say, good God! Ordener! This Ordener!—It is impossible! . . ."

The vindictive expression of hate which gleamed in the dull eyes of the old man froze Ethel's trembling heart, who vainly regretted her imprudent speech.

The blow was struck. Schumacker remained for some moments immobile and with arms crossed; all his body trembled as though he had been on the rack, his burning eyeballs stood out in their sockets, and his gaze, fixed on the flagstones, seemed to be trying to pierce them. At last some words fell from his blue lips, pronounced in a feeble voice, as though he were dreaming.

"Ordener! Yes, that is it, Ordener Guldenlew!—Good. Come! Schumacker, old fool, open your arms to him, this loyal young man who comes to poniard you."

Suddenly he stamped his foot, and his voice thundered:

"So they have sent all their infamous race
to insult me in my cell ! I have already seen
one d'Ahlefeld ; I have almost smiled on a
Guldenlew ! The monsters ! This Ordener
owns the same spirit and the same name !
Woe to me ! Woe to him !"

He fell exhausted into the arm-chair, and
whilst his breast swelled with long sighs, poor
Ethel, shuddering with fright, wept at his
feet.

"Do not cry, my girl," said he in a sinister
voice, "come, oh ! come to my heart."

And he pressed her in his arms.

Ethel did not know how to take this caress
in a moment of rage, until he continued :

"At least, girl, you have been more far-
sighted than your old father. You have not
been deceived by the venomous serpent with
the soft eyes. Come, let me thank you for
the hatred you have shown this execrable
Ordener."

Ethel shuddered at praise—alas ! so little
deserved.

"My lord and father," said she, "pray
calm yourself."

"Promise me," said Schumacker, vehe-
mently, "that you will ever preserve this same
feeling toward that Ordener Guldenlew.
Swear to me."

"God forbids swearing, father."

"Swear to it, girl," repeated Schumacker, "that you will always preserve the same feeling toward that Ordener Guldenlew."

Ethel found no difficulty in thus replying:
"Always."

"Well said, my child. I cannot bequeath you the riches and honor of which they have deprived me, but I can transmit my hatred for them to you. Listen! They deprived me of my rank and glory, they dragged me to the scaffold in irons, loading me with every infamy, and torturing me with every pain. The wretches owed their power to me, and turned it against me. May Heaven hear me. Curse them, and all their offspring!"

He paused a moment, then stooped to embrace the poor girl, who was terrified at his imprecations.

"But tell me, my Ethel, my only hope and pride, how was your instinct keener than mine? How did you discover that this traitor bore the hated name, which is more bitter than gall to my heart? How did you learn this secret?"

She was about to answer, when the door was thrown open.

A man clothed in black entered, carrying a black stick, and wearing a burnished steel chain around his neck. He was surrounded by halberdiers, also in black.

"What do you want with me?" said the captive, sharply.

The man, without replying, unrolled a long parchment, from which hung a green seal attached by silk. He read in a loud voice:

"In the name of his majesty, our merciful lord and sovereign, Christian, king.

"It is written that Schumacker, State prisoner in the royal fortress of Munckholm, and his daughter are to follow the bearer of this said order."

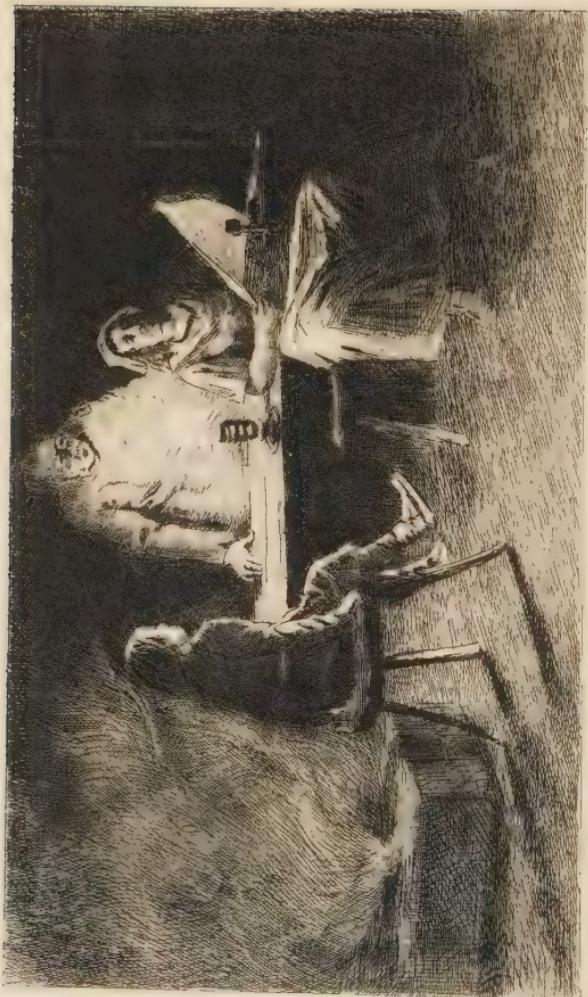
Schumacker repeated his question:

"What do you want with me?"

The man in black impassibly prepared himself to read the order over again.

"That is sufficient," said the old man.

Then, rising, he signed to the astonished and terrified Ethel to follow under this dismal escort.





XLI.

A funereal knock is heard, an abject servant of justice has just arrived at his door, and informs him he is wanted.

JOSEPH DE MAISTRE.

The shades of night had fallen, the cold wind howled around the Accursed Tower, and the very doors of the ruin of Vyglia trembled on their hinges.

The wild inhabitants of the tower, the executioner and his family, were around a fire on the first floor of the tower. The flames shed a glare on their sombre faces and their scarlet clothes. There was a savage ferocity about the children's faces, resembling their father's laugh, combined with their mother's haggard expression. Their eyes and those of Bechlie were turned toward Orugix, whose fatigued and dusty appearance denoted that he had just arrived from a great distance.

"Wife, listen, children, listen. It is not to bring bad news that I have not been absent two entire days. If before another month

has passed I am not the royal executioner, may I never tie a slip-knot or wield an axe. Rejoice, my little cubs; your father will, perhaps, leave you as a heritage the scaffold of Copenhagen itself."

"Nychol," said Bechlie, "what has happened?"

"And you, my old Bohemian," replied Nychol, with his deep laugh, "rejoice also. You can soon buy some blue beads to ornament your throat, somewhat like a strangled swan's. Our engagement will soon cease; but when you see me the executioner in chief of both kingdoms, you will not refuse to break another pig with me."

"What has happened, father?" said the children. The elder was playing with a wooden horse covered with blood, the younger amusing himself with plucking a live bird that he had taken from its mother's nest.

"What is it, my children? Kill that bird, Hasper; it squeaks like an old saw. Besides, you must not be cruel. Kill it. Very little has occurred, Dame Bechlie, except that in eight days or so, ex-Chancellor Schumacker, now a prisoner at Munckholm, who was within my reach at Copenhagen, and the famous brigand of Iceland, Han of Klipstadur, will pass through my hands, perhaps on the same day."

The wandering look of the red woman became full of astonishment and curiosity.

"Schumacker! Han of Iceland! What is this, Nychol?"

"Yesterday morning, on my way to Skon-gen, I met a whole regiment of Munckholm musketeers, who were returning victoriously to Drontheim. I questioned one of the soldiers, who deigned to answer me, because he doubtless did not know the meaning of my red jacket and red cart. He informed me that the insurgents, hemmed in near Black Pillar, had been cut to pieces by the musketeers. You must know, Bechlie, the Bohemian, that these rebels had arisen for the sake of Schumacker, and were commanded by Han of Iceland. This constitutes a criminal charge against Han of Iceland, and high treason against Schumacker, which will lead these honorable gentlemen either to the block or the gibbet. For each of these great executions I cannot receive less than fifteen golden ducats. Besides having the greatest honor in the two kingdoms conferred on me, I shall have other privileges . . ."

"Is it possible," interrupted Bechlie, "that Han of Iceland has been captured?"

"Don't interrupt your lord and master, daughter of perdition," said the headsman. "Yes; this famous Han of Iceland has been

taken prisoner, together with his lieutenants, some other brigand chiefs. They will bring me in twelve crowns a head, besides the sale of their bodies."

The woman and the children approached Orugix.

"What! did you see Han, father?" asked the children.

"Be quiet, children. You each cry like a rascal who declares he is innocent. Yes, I saw him. He is a giant, and he was walking with his arms crossed behind him, bound in chains. His forehead was bandaged, being wounded in the head; but I will soon cure him of that wound."

After making a horrible sign, the executioner continued:

"He was followed by four of his companions, likewise prisoners. They were all to be tried at Drontheim; likewise the ex-Grand Chancellor Schumacker. There will be a special court, the high syndic, over which the present grand chancellor will preside."

"Father, what were the other prisoners like?"

"The first two were old men—one a miner, the other a mountaineer. Both seemed disconsolate. The third was a young miner, who walked firmly along, whistling. The other—you remember, my Bechlie, the travelers who

sought shelter here on the night of the storm, about ten days ago."

"As satan remembers the day of his fall," said the woman.

"Did you remark a young man who was with that old idiot of a doctor in a big wig? The young traveler who wore a large green cloak and a hat with a black feather?"

"I can see him now before me, when he said: 'Woman, we have gold!'"

"Well, well, old woman, may I never strangle more grouse if the fourth prisoner were not the same young man. I did not see his face, certainly, as it was concealed by his plume, his hair, and his cloak; besides which, he walked with his head bent down. But the clothes, the boots, the same manner—there, I will swallow the stone gibbet of Skongen at a mouthful if that is not the same man. What do you say to that, Bechlie? Would it not be droll, if after helping this stranger to sustain life I should assist him in shortening it, and that I should prove my dexterity to him after he had enjoyed my hospitality?"

The executioner, laughing loudly for some time, then continued:

"Come, let us rejoice and drink. Yes, Bechlie, give me some of that beer, which rasps the throat as though it were made of files. Let us drink to my future advancement.

Honors and health to my lord Nychol Orugix, royal executioner in perspective. I will own to you, old sinner, that I had much trouble in getting to Noes, in order that I might quietly hang some ignoble stealer of cabbages and endive; but thirty-two pieces were not to be despised, and, after all, I shall not lower myself by executing merely thieves and scamps of that kind when once I have beheaded the noble count, ex-grand chancellor, and the famous demon of Iceland. So I resigned myself to my fate, and dispatched the poor wretch at Noes, while awaiting my diploma as master royal of lofty works. Here," added he, drawing his leather purse from his knapsack, "are the thirty-two pieces that I have brought you."

At this moment a horn gave three blasts outside the tower.

"Wife!" cried Orugix, rising, "those are the high syndic's archers."

So speaking he hastened down.

He immediately returned with a large document, of which he had broken the seal.

"There," said he to the woman, "just read what the high syndic says—you who could decipher satan's conjuring box. Perhaps it is my promotion. As the court will be presided over by a grand chancellor, and the accused was a grand chancellor, none but a

royal executioner should carry out the sentence."

The woman took it, and after looking well over the parchment, read the following words aloud, while the children stared at her in stupid wonderment :

" In the name of the High Syndic of the Drontheimhus ! It is ordered that Nyhol Orugix, executioner of the province, is to leave at once for Drontheim, taking with him his axe of honor, his block and black hangings."

" Is that all ?" asked the executioner, discontentedly.

" Yes, that is all," replied Bechlie.

" Executioner of the province !" muttered Orugix, between his teeth.

And he cast angry looks at the court parchment.

" Well," said he at last, " I must go. Yet I am ordered to take the axe of honor, and the black hangings. Mind, Bechlie, you see that my axe is not rusted, and that the drapery is not marked. Besides, I must not be discouraged. Perhaps I shall owe my advancement to this fine execution. Well, so much the worse for those condemned ; they will not have the satisfaction of being put to death by a royal executioner."

XLII.

ELVIRE.—What has become of poor Sancho? He no longer appears in the town.

NUNO.—Sancho has been wise enough to put himself in hiding.

LOPE DE VEGA—*Le Meilleur alcade est le Roi.*

Count d'Ahlefeld, wearing an ample satin gown trimmed with ermine, with his judge's wig covering both head and shoulders, wearing several stars and decorations, among which was the collar of royal orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog, in fact, in full robes as Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway, was walking about Countess d'Ahlefeld's room with a preoccupied air.

"Ah, it is nine o'clock. The court will soon be sitting. I must not keep them waiting, for the sentence must be passed this night, so that the execution may take place to-morrow morning, at the latest. The high syndic assured me that the headsman would be here before dawn. Elphège, have you ordered the barge to be in readiness to convey me to Munckholm?"

"My lord, it has been here at least half an hour," answered the countess, rising from her arm-chair.

"And is my litter at the door?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I must go—you say, Elphège, there is a love affair going on between Ordener Guldenlew and Schumacker's daughter?"

"They are deeply in love, I can assure you," answered the countess, with rage and contempt.

"Who could have imagined it? Yet I had my doubts."

"And I also," said the countess; "this is some of that cursed Levin's tricks!"

"That old rascal of a Mecklenburger!" muttered the chancellor. "Yes, I will certainly recommend him to Arensdorf. If I could but compass his disgrace! Listen, Elphège, an idea has struck me."

"What is it?"

"You know there are six prisoners at Munckholm waiting for judgment. Schumacker, I trust, by this time to-morrow will cease troubling us. That huge mountaineer, our false Han of Iceland, has sworn to keep up the deception to the last, fully convinced that Musdœmon, from whom he has received heavy sums of money, will help him to escape. That Musdœmon's ideas are really diabolical.

Three other prisoners are rebel chiefs. The last of the number joined the meeting at Apsyl-Corh, no one knows how. Owing to Musdœmon's precautions, he also has fallen into our hands. Musdœmon thinks he is Levin's spy. He asked for the general immediately on his arrival, and appeared much dismayed on hearing of the Mecklenburger's absence. This young man refused to answer any of Musdœmon's questions."

"My dear lord, why did you not question him yourself?" inquired the countess.

"Really, Elphège, how could I do so, with all the business I have on hand? I left it to Musdœmon, who is equally interested with myself. Besides, this man is of no importance—only some poor vagabond who will serve our purpose by representing him as Levin de Knud's agent. He was taken when in the midst of the rebels. That alone will prove there is a connivance between the Mecklenburger and Schumacker—a fact which will compass this cursed Levin's disgrace, even should an indictment against him be impossible."

"You are right, my lord."

The countess reflected a moment:

"But Baron Thorwick's fatal passion for Ethel Schumacker?"

The chancellor smoothed his brow; then suddenly he shrugged his shoulders:

"Listen, Elphège. Neither you nor I are novices in this world's ways. When Schumacker has for the second time been convicted of high treason, when this infamy has ended in his death on the scaffold, when his daughter is thus branded with her father's disgrace, and sunk to the lowest grades of society, do you believe Ordener Guldenlew will remember this childish fancy that you term passion, from hearing a young girl's foolish words, that he will hesitate for one moment between the dishonored daughter of a wretched criminal and the noble daughter of a mighty chancellor? We must judge men by ourselves, my dear; where have you ever seen a human heart act thus?"

"I trust you are right. I made a request to the syndic—do not neglect to have it ratified—that Schumacker's daughter should be present at her father's trial, and be placed near me. I am anxious to study this creature."

"All is precious that can throw any light on this affair," said the chancellor, phlegmatically. "Does any one know where Ordener is now?"

"No one knows. He is a worthy pupil of old Levin—just such another knight-errant. I think he is at Ward-Hus."

"Well, well. Our Ulrica will settle that. I forgot the court was waiting for me."

"One word more, my lord. I spoke to you yesterday, but you were so preoccupied that I could get no reply. Where is my Frederick?"

"Frederick?" said the count, covering his face with his hand.

"Yes; answer me—my Frederick! His regiment has returned to Drontheim without him. Swear to me that Frederick was not in that horrible defile of Black Pillar. Why at the mention of Frederick's name has your face so changed? I am terribly anxious about him."

The chancellor, recovering himself: "Elphège, calm yourself. I vow he was not at the Black Pillar. Besides, the lists of killed and wounded have been published."

"Yes; I now feel reassured," replied the countess. "Only two officers were killed—Captain Lory and young Baron Randmer, who was my poor Frederick's companion in all his follies at the Copenhagen balls. Oh, I read the list most carefully, I assure you. Tell me, my lord, is my son then still at Walhstrom?"

"Yes, he is there," answered the count.

"Well, then, dear," said the mother, tenderly, "I have one favor to ask—will you see that my Frederick soon returns from that awful country?"

The chancellor, with difficulty disengaging himself from her arms: "Madame," said he,

"the court is waiting for me. Adieu. What you require does not depend on me."

And he left her abruptly.

The countess remained gloomy and thoughtful.

"It does not depend on him!" she exclaimed, softly. "One word from him would give me back my son. I have always thought so, that man is truly wicked."

XLIII.

Is it thus that a man of my importance is treated? Is it thus that we neglect the respect due to justice?

CALDERON—*Louis Perez de Galice.*

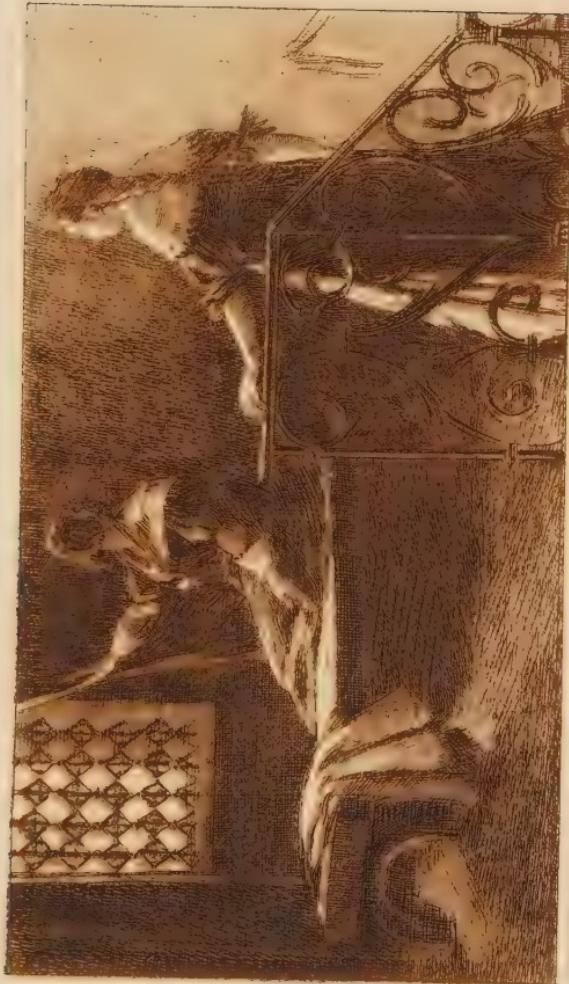
On leaving the dungeon of the Lion of Sleswig, the guards separated the trembling Ethel from her father, and led her through dark passages altogether unknown to her, until they came to a gloomy cell, which she entered, and the door was closed upon her. On the opposite side was a large open grating, through which the light from the torches gleamed on a woman veiled and dressed in black, who was seated on a bench in front of the opening, and making signs to Ethel to take a seat beside her. Ethel, thunderstruck, obeyed in silence.

She gazed through the open grill upon the most solemn and imposing scene before her.

At the end of a hall, draped in black, and faintly lighted by means of brass lamps suspended from the ceiling, was a table, shaped



Démarest inv.



like a horseshoe, around which seven judges in black gowns were seated. The one in the centre occupied a raised seat, and was decorated with diamond collars and glittering gold stars. The judge at the right of the centre wore a white scarf and ermine cloak—his badge of office as high syndic of the province. On a platform, over which a dais was spread, to the right of the bench, sat an old man in black pontifical vestments. To the left was a table covered with papers, behind which stood a short man, with an enormous wig, who was enveloped in the folds of a long black gown.

Facing the judges was a wooden bench, surrounded by halberdiers bearing torches, the light of which was reflected by a forest of pikes and muskets on a crowd of spectators, pressing against the iron grill which separated them from the court.

All this to Ethel seemed but a dream; whilst she was far from being indifferent to the result. Some inward voice warned her that a crisis in her life was at hand. She was a prey to different feelings—either to know at once the reason of her interest in this scene, or not to know it at all. For some days she had had the idea that Ordener was lost to her forever; so what had life to offer? She sought only to know the end of fate. Feeling that the decisive moment had now arrived, she

dwell on the spectacle before her less with repugnance than with a sort of feverish but mournful joy.

The president arose, proclaiming, in the name of the king, that the court of justice was open.

She heard a little man in black, to the left of the bench, read in a low and rapid voice a long discourse, wherein her father's name was mingled with the words *conspiracy, revolt of the miners and high treason*. Then she remembered the strange woman's fatal words in the tower garden, telling her of the accusation which threatened her father. Ethel shuddered on hearing the man in black wind up his discourse with the word *death*, forcibly pronounced.

Terrified, she turned toward the woman, whom she instinctively feared.

"Where are we? what is the meaning of all this?" she timidly inquired.

A gesture from her mysterious companion enjoined her to silence and attention. She turned her attention to the court.

The venerable man in episcopal vestments had just risen, and Ethel recoiled at these words, so distinctly pronounced:

"In the name of almighty and merciful God, I, Pamphile-Eleuthere, bishop of the loyal town of Drontheim, in the royal

province of the Drontheimhus, bow before this honored court which judges in the name of the king, our lord next to the God.

"And I say, seeing that the prisoners now before this court are men and Christians, having no counsel, it is my intention, honored judges, to lend them all the assistance in my power in the cruel position in which it is God's will to place them.

"Praying the Almighty to give strength to our weakness and light to our blindness.

"Thus it is that I, bishop of this royal diocese, bow to this honored and judicial court."

After having thus spoken, the bishop left his episcopal throne, and seated himself on the prisoners' wooden bench, amid the applause of the people.

The president arose, and said in a harsh tone:

"Halberdiers, make silence! My lord bishop, in the name of the prisoners, the court begs to thank your reverence. People of the Drontheimhus, listen. The judgment will be given without appeal in this royal high court of justice. Archers, bring in the prisoners."

There was a dead silence throughout. Only all present moved their heads about in expectation, like the heavy waves of a stormy sea when thunder is at hand.

Soon Ethel could hear a dull sound of some extraordinary movement taking place in the passages beneath her. The audience trembled with impatience and curiosity. The steps came nearer ; halberds and muskets glittered ; and then six men, in chains, bareheaded, and surrounded by guards, were brought into the middle of the court. Ethel saw but one, an old gray-bearded man in a black simarre—her father.

She fell forward against the stone partition before which she was seated ; everything swam before her eyes ; and it seemed that she could hear her very heart beating. She feebly murmured :

“ Oh, God ! help me ! ”

The veiled woman leaned towards her and made her inhale some salts, to arouse her from her lethargy.

“ Noble lady,” were her first words, “ pray speak to me, that I may know I am not the sport of hellish phantoms.”

The stranger was deaf to her entreaties, and turned silently toward the court. And poor Ethel, now feeling slightly better, could but imitate her reserve.

The president had risen, and had said in slow and solemn tones :

“ Prisoners, you are brought before us to judge whether you are guilty of high treason,

conspiracy, and in bearing arms against our noble sovereign. Consider the matter well, for an accusation of leze-majesty is made against you."

At this moment the light fell on one of the prisoners, who, with head bent down, endeavored to conceal his face beneath his long, curling hair. Ethel felt a cold shudder run through her frame; she fancied she recognized . . . But no, it could only be some illusion. The hall was so faintly lighted that men themselves looked only like shadows; the large crucifix of polished ebony over the president's chair was scarcely discernible.

Yet Ethel could see from the distance that this young man's cloak was green, his hair brown, and the faint glimpse of his features made her fancy . . . But no, it was not, it could not be! It was a horrible illusion.

The prisoners were all seated on a bench where the bishop had sat down. Schumacker was at one end. He was separated from the young man with the brown hair by his four companions in misfortune, among whom was a kind of giant, who, like his three neighbors, was roughly clad. The bishop was seated at the other end of the bench.

Ethel saw the president turn toward her father.

"Old man," said he, harshly, "what is your name, and who are you?"

The old man raised his venerable head.

"Formerly," he firmly replied, looking at the president, "I was called Count of Griffenfeld and of Tongsberg; Prince of Wollin; Prince of the Holy Empire; Knight of the Royal Order of the Elephant; Knight of the Royal Order of Dannebrog; Knight of the Golden Fleece of Germany; Knight of the Garter of England; Prime Minister; Inspector-General of the Universities; Grand Chancellor of Denmark; and . . ."

The president interrupted him.

"Accused, you were not asked what your name was, nor what you were, but you are requested to say what you are called, and what you are."

"Well, then," quickly replied the old man, "I am called John Schumacker, aged sixty-nine, and I am nothing more than your old benefactor, Chancellor d'Ahlefeld."

The president appeared thunderstruck.

"I recognized you, my lord count," added the ex-grand chancellor; "and as you did not appear to be equally mindful of me, I have taken the liberty of recalling to your grace that we are old acquaintances."

"Schumacker," exclaimed the president, in a tone of concentrated anger, "you are trespassing on the court's time."

The old captive again interrupted:

"We have changed places, noble chancellor. Formerly it was I who simply called you *d'Ahlefeld*, and you addressed me as *my lord count*."

"Accused, you are only damaging your cause by alluding to the infamy for which you have already been convicted."

"If the judgment was infamous for any one, Count d'Ahlefeld, it was certainly not for me."

The aged captive had risen while pronouncing these forcible words. The president extended his hand.

"Sit down. Do not insult the court, the judges who have condemned you, and the king who has appointed these judges. Remember, the king deigned to spare your life. And confine yourself to your own defense."

Schumacker's only response was in shrugging his shoulders.

"Have you," asked the president, "any confession to make concerning the crime of which you are accused?"

Seeing that Schumacker remained silent, the president repeated the question.

"Are you addressing yourself to me?" said the ex-chancellor. "I thought, noble Count d'Ahlefeld, that you were speaking to yourself. What crime do you hold against me? Have I ever given an Iscariot kiss to a friend?

Have I ever imprisoned, condemned or dishonored a benefactor? him who I owed all, have I ever stripped of all? I am at a loss to know, my lord chancellor in office, why I have been brought here. Doubtless to prove your ability in causing the heads of the innocent to fall. In fact I shall not be sorry to be able to judge, if you can compass my ruin equally as well as you are now ruining the country, and if a stroke of your pen will effect my death, as one letter of the alphabet was sufficient to provoke war with Sweden.”¹¹

He had hardly finished this bitter tirade when the man seated before the table to the left arose.

“ My lord president, and you, my lords,” said he, after bowing profoundly to the judges, “ I demand that John Schumacker shall be silenced, if he continues thus to insult his grace, the president of this honored court.”

The calm voice of the bishop was heard :

“ Master Private Secretary, an accused cannot be denied a hearing.”

“ You are right, reverend bishop,” exclaimed the president, hastily. “ Our intention is to give full liberty to the defense. For the sake of his own interest, I should advise the prisoner to moderate his language.”

Schumacker shook his head, and said coolly :

"It seems Count d'Ahlefeld is surer of his case than in 1677."

"Silence," said the president, hastening to address the next prisoner, by asking his name.

It was a huge mountaineer, with his forehead bandaged, who rose, saying:

"I am Han, of Klipstadur, in Iceland."

A shudder ran through the crowd, and Schumacker, whose head had fallen forward, darted a quick glance at his formidable neighbor, from whom the other prisoners kept aloof.

"Han of Iceland," asked the president, when the terror had somewhat subsided, "what have you to say to the court?"

Of all the spectators, Ethel was no less struck with the appearance of this famous brigand, who had so long filled her imagination. Terrified, she looked with horror on this immense giant, a murderer, to whom her Ordener had perhaps fallen a victim. She was so pursued with this and other painful ideas, that she scarcely heard Han of Iceland's coarse and embarrassed reply, except when he declared himself chief of the rebel bands.

"Did you offer yourself," asked the president, "or were you instigated by any stranger to take the command of the rebels?"

The brigand replied :

"I did not offer myself."

"Who suggested this crime?"

"A man called Hacket."

"Who was this Hacket?"

"An agent of Schumacker's, who called him Count of Griffenfeld."

The president turned to Schumacker :

"Schumacker, do you know this Hacket?"

"You have forestalled me, Count d'Ahlefeld," answered the old man. "I was about to ask you the same question."

"John Schumacker," said the president, "hatred is a bad counselor. The court will know how to appreciate your defense."

The bishop's voice was again heard :

"Master Clerk of the Court," said he, turning toward the private secretary, the short man who seemed to be both recorder and prosecutor, "is this Hacket one of my clients?"

"No, your reverence," answered the secretary.

"Is it known what has become of him?"

"We were not able to capture him. He has disappeared."

It was noticed that the secretary's voice seemed strained.

"I should say he has faded away altogether," interposed Schumacker.

The bishop continued :

"Has good search been made for this Hacket? Has any description been given of him, Master Clerk of the Court?"

Before the clerk could reply, one of the prisoners rose, a proud and severe looking young miner.

"You can easily have that," said he, in a loud tone. "This villain, Hacket, Schumacker's agent, is a short man, with an open-looking face, open as the jaws of hell. Indeed, my lord bishop, his voice sounded very much like that of his lordship who is writing at that table, and whom your reverence calls *private secretary*. If this hall were less dark, and the gentleman there had less hair about his face, I am certain he would very much resemble that traitor, Hacket himself."

"Our brother is right," cried the two comrades of the young miner.

"So, indeed!" muttered Schumacker, triumphantly.

The secretary shuddered involuntarily, either from fear or with indignation at thus being compared to Hacket. The president also looked annoyed, and hastened to say :

"Prisoners, do not forget that you should be silent until you are questioned, and do not attempt to insult a minister of justice by such degrading comparisons."

"But, my lord president," interposed the bishop, "this is only a question of identity. If there are some points of resemblance between the clerk and the culprit Hacket, all this might be of service."

The president interrupted him :

"Han of Iceland, you have had much to do with Hacket. Tell us, just to satisfy his reverence, say if he resembles our honored private secretary."

"Not in the least," replied the giant, unhesitatingly.

"There, my lord bishop," added the president.

The bishop signified his satisfaction, and the president then questioned another prisoner in the usual way.

"What is your name?"

"Wilfred Kennybol from the Kole Mountains."

"Were you one of the rebels?"

"Yes, my lord. Truth is worth more than life. I was taken prisoner in the cursed gorges of Black Pillar. I was chief of the mountaineers."

"Did you incite any men to rebellion?"

"Our brothers, the miners arose on account of the royal tax, because the government would not listen to their complaints. If you had only a mud hut and two old foxes' skins

you surely would like to be master of them. Well, my lord, when the miners determined to revolt they asked us to join them. So small a service could scarcely be refused between brothers who repeat the same prayers and invoke the same saints. That is all."

"Did no one ferment, encourage, and lead on this insurrection?" said the president.

"A Master Hacket, who was always talking of releasing a prisoner at Munckholm, a count, whose agent he declared himself to be. We promised to do so. It little mattered to us if we set one person or more at liberty."

"Was not this count called Schumacker, or Griffenfeld?"

"Just so, your lordship."

"Did you ever see him?"

"No, my lord; but if the old man who gave himself such a number of names just now is he, I must allow . . ."

"What?" interrupted the president.

"That he has a splendid white beard, almost as good as that of the father of the husband of my sister Maase, of the hamlet of Surb, who lived till he was a hundred and twenty years old."

It was impossible to see in this gloomy hall if the mountaineer's reply was disappointing to the president. He quickly ordered the

archers to display the scarlet banners before the court.

"Wilfred Kennybol," said he, "do you recognize these banners?"

"Yes; they were handed to us by Hacket, who also, in Count Schumacker's name, sent arms to the miners. We mountaineers did not want them, as we live by our carbine and game bag. I, my lord, here fastened like a fowl ready for roasting, have aimed, from the depths of the valley, at an old eagle, and brought him down from his loftiest flight, though he seemed but a sparrow or thrush when high up in the air."

"You hear, my lords," observed the private secretary, addressing the judges: "the prisoner Schumacker, through his agent Hacket, sent both arms and banners to the rebels."

"Kennybol, have you anything further to say?" inquired the president.

"Nothing. Only I do not deserve death. I only assisted the miners; and I can assure your lordships that, old sportsman that I am, I never fired on one of the king's deer."

The president, without replying to this plea, hastened to question Kennybol's two companions, both chiefs of the miners. Jonas, the elder, but repeated what Kennybol had said. The younger man was the same who had remarked the resemblance between the

clerk of the court and the treacherous Hacket. This was Norbith, who proudly owned his share in the revolt, but refused to answer any questions relating to Hacket or Schumacker. He said he had sworn to be silent, and he must keep his oath; and, notwithstanding threats and remonstrances, he remained firm. He said he had not rebelled for Schumacker, but for his mother's sake, who was perishing from cold and hunger. He might have deserved death, but it would be an act of injustice to condemn him, as it would also kill his poor mother, who did not merit it.

When Norbith ceased speaking the clerk of the court summed up in a few words, dwelling on the fearful charges brought against the prisoners, particularly against Schumacker. He then read some of the seditious devices on the banners; he pointed out how the ex-chancellor's accomplices all agreed in their replies, even young Norbith's silence, though tied by his oath, was condemnatory. "There remains one more prisoner to question," said he. "We have every reason to believe that he is a secret agent of the one who has watched so badly over the peace of the Drontheimhus. Even were he guiltless of connivance, his fatal negligence has favored this rebellion, cost the lives of these unfortunate

men, and sent Schumacker to the scaffold, from which he was previously so generously saved by the king's clemency."

To Ethel's fears for Ordener was now added the horror of her father's doom, as she listened to these terrible words. The poor girl wept bitterly, while her father arose, and calmly said: "Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, I am lost in admiration at your ingenuity. Have you already requested the executioner to be in attendance?"

Ethel thought no grief could touch her now, but she soon realized that she was deceived.

The sixth prisoner had just risen; noble and superb, he had brushed back the hair which covered his face, and to the questions addressed to him by the president he answered in a firm and distinct tone,

"I am Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, Knight of Dannebrog."

A cry of amazement was heard from the private secretary:

"The viceroy's son!"

"The viceroy's son!" echoed all voices as if the hall had a hundred echoes.

The president fell back in his chair, the judges leaned toward one another, looking like trees blown by a contrary wind. But the agitation was far greater among the audience. Some mounted the stone copings,

others rushed to the iron gratings, one continual murmur ran throughout the court. The guards broke through their enforced silence, and added to the universal clamor by their ejaculations.

How can Ethel's mingled feelings of joy and grief be depicted. Ordener stood before her; she could gaze on him, while he knew not she was present. Her well-beloved was there—her Ordener, whom she thought dead. He was lost to her. This friend had deceived her, and yet, with all this, she adored him still. This was no mere delusion, but Ordener himself, whom she had more frequently seen in her dreams than in reality. Was he there as a guardian angel, or an evil genius? May she rest her hopes on him, or must she tremble for his safety? Before the spectators heard his name Ethel recognized him at once, and this knowledge, combined with other feelings, completely overpowered her.

The poor girl fainted, sinking like a flame that is extinguished by too much fuel.

She soon recovered a second time, thanks to the care of the mysterious stranger. Her first glance was turned toward the young man, who still remained standing. He alone was calm amid the general clamor. When order was restored the words Ordener Guldenlew still rang in her ears. Ethel was grieved

to see his arm in a sling, his cloak much torn, his trusty sword gone. Added to this, he was manacled. Nothing escaped her loving eyes. She could not clasp him to her, but her soul was filled with his image; and it must be said, to love's honor and shame, that in that very hall, which contained her father and her father's persecutors, Ethel saw but one man.

Silence was gradually established. The president proceeded in his duty of questioning the viceroy's son:

"My lord baron . . ." said he, in trembling accents.

"I am not termed here *my lord baron*, but simply Ordener Guldenlew, just as the former Count of Griffenfeld is now called John Schumacker."

The president remained a moment as though thunderstruck.

"Well, then, Ordener Guldenlew," added he, "doubtless it is by some mischance that you are placed in this position. You were traveling, and were taken prisoner by the rebels, who compelled you to join them, which would account for your being found in their ranks."

The secretary arose, saying:

"Noble judges, the name alone of the son of the Viceroy of Norway is quite sufficient

plea. Baron Ordener Guldenlew cannot be a rebel. Our illustrious president has clearly explained the reason of his arrest. The noble prisoner has been to blame for concealing his name. We must demand his immediate liberation, and that all proceedings should cease against him. We must express our regret that he should have occupied the same bench as that criminal Schumacker and his accomplices."

"What are you saying?" cried Ordener.

"The secretary, our public prosecutor, desists from all further proceedings against you," replied the president.

"He is in error, then," said Ordener, in a firm and distinct tone. "I alone ought to be accused, judged, and condemned." He hesitated a moment, and then added in a tone less firm, "For I alone am guilty."

"Guilty alone!" cried the president.

"Guilty alone!" repeated the private secretary.

The audience burst forth in exclamations of surprise. Wretched Ethel shuddered at this confession, which brought death in its train for her Ordener, forgetful that by this means her father's life was saved.

"Halberdiers, make silence," cried the president, trying to gather his ideas together

and regain his presence of mind. "Ordener Guldenlew, explain yourself," said he.

The young man was lost in thought. He aroused himself with a deep sigh, then arose, and calmly replied :

"Yes, an infamous death awaits me—I, who had life before me in all its glory and happiness ; but God knows the heart's secret truly, God alone. I have one great duty to perform, for which my blood and honor may be sacrificed ; but I feel no remorse, and I shall die without repentance. Let your lordships not be surprised. There are mysteries in the human soul which you cannot fathom. Heaven alone can be their judge. Hearken to my words ! Act toward me as your conscience dictates, but pardon these unfortunate men, more particularly Schumacker, who has already suffered for more crimes than any one man could commit. Yes, my noble judges, I am guilty, and the only guilty party. Schumacker is innocent ; the other unfortunates were simply misled. The promoter of this rebellion was myself."

"You !" exclaimed the astonished president and private secretary.

"I ! and interrupt me no more, my lords. I am anxious to end matters and complete my own accusation, in order to justify these men. I instigated the miners to revolt in

Schumacker's name. I distributed banners, gold, and arms in the Munckholm prisoner's name. Hacket was my agent."

At the mention of *Hacket* the clerk of the court looked completely stupefied.

Ordener continued :

"I will spare your time, my lords. I was taken in the midst of the miners, whom I had incited to rebel. I accomplished all without adherents. It is now for you to judge whether my crime admits of no denial; if so, then the proof is clear that Schumacker is innocent; and likewise the poor creatures you term his accomplices."

Thus saying, the young man raised his eyes to heaven. Ethel was breathless with suspense. She had noticed how bitterly Ordener had mentioned her father's name, although he was trying to justify him. All seemed inexplicable to her, except the sense of impending misfortune, which she so clearly realized.

The president was evidently struck with the same feeling. It might have been said that he could not believe his ears. He nevertheless addressed the son of the viceroy :

"If you alone are the only promoter of this rebellion, what motives had you for taking such a step?"

"I cannot say."

Ethel shuddered when she heard the president continue in an almost irritated voice :

“ Did you not carry on an intrigue with Schumacker’s daughter ? ”

Ordener, looking straight at the bench, indignantly exclaimed :

“ Chancellor d’Ahlefeld, be content with my life, which I give to you, and do not forget the respect you owe to a noble and innocent girl. Do not attempt to degrade her a second time ! ”

The poor girl flushed at the words *a second time*, although she knew not why her defender lay such stress on them. The president clearly showed he understood them.

“ Ordener Guldenlew, do not forget to respect the king’s court of justice and the chief officials of the same. In the name of the bench, I reprimand you. I request you to confess the motive which impelled you to commit the crime of which you now accuse yourself.”

“ I must repeat, I cannot tell you.”

“ Was it not for Schumacker’s deliverance ? ” inquired the clerk.

Ordener remained silent.

“ It is useless for you to maintain this reserve, prisoner Ordener, for it has been proved that you were in communication with Schumacker,” said the president. “ This

confession of yours in no way justifies him, but simply adds to his guilt. You went often to Munckholm. You must have had a wonderful attraction there, the proof of which is this diamond buckle."

The president took from his desk a diamond buckle and showed it to Ordener.

"Do you recognize that as having belonged to you?"

"Yes. By what chance . . .?"

"Well! a dying rebel gave it to our secretary, saying you had given it to him as payment for rowing you from Drontheim port to Munckholm fortress. Now, I would ask your lordships, would Ordener Guldenlew give such a reward to a simple boatman if it were not a matter of vital importance for him to visit Schumacker's prison?"

"Ah," said the prisoner Kennybol, "his lordship is right. My poor comrade, Guldon Stayper, said the same, and I recognize this buckle as the one he had in his possession."

"Silence," cried the president. "It is for Ordener Guldenlew to speak."

"I do not deny I was anxious to see Schumacker. But as for the buckle, that says nothing. Diamonds are not allowed in the fortress. The boatman, while crossing, complained of his poverty. I threw him this buckle, which I could not retain myself."

"Pardon me, my lord," interrupted the secretary, "this rule excepts the viceroy's son. You could then . . ."

"I did not wish to be known."

"Why?" said the president.

"That I cannot say."

"The very fact of your complete understanding with Schumacker and his daughter proves the object of your plot was their deliverance."

Schumacker, who had occasionally disdainfully shrugged his shoulders during this time, now arose, saying :

"Deliver me! Why, the object of this infernal plot is to compromise and ruin me. Do you imagine Ordener Guldenlew would have admitted his share in this crime had he not been found in the midst of the rebels? I can plainly see he has inherited his father's hatred for me. As for any understanding he had with myself and daughter, let this cursed Guldenlew know that my daughter has inherited my hatred for him, and the whole race of the Guldenlews and of the d'Ahlefelds."

Ordener sighed deeply, whilst Ethel murmured a denial. Schumacker took his seat, trembling with passion.

"The court will decide," said the president.

While Schumacker was speaking, Ordener never raised his eyes. He recovered himself, and again addressed the court.

"Oh, noble judges, hear me. Well weigh the case. Remember Ordener Guldenlew alone is guilty. Schumacker is innocent, and the other unfortunate men were but tools of Hacket, my agent. I compassed all the rest."

Kennybol interrupted him :

"Most noble judges, I can vouch for the truth of his lordship's words. He confided the secret of his journey to me, at my brother Braall's house in the hamlet of Surb. He was then on his way to Walderhog Cave, in search of Han of Iceland, hoping to make him our chief. Naming him, will not I hope bring me bad luck. What the young master says is true—that we were led on by that cursed Hacket. This proves that we do not deserve death."

"Master private secretary," said the president, "the debate has closed. What is your judgment?"

The clerk stroked his lace bands, bowed to the court, and, with his eyes fixed on the president, pronounced the following words in a solemn tone :

"My lord president, most honored judges ! the prosecution is victorious. Ordener Guldenlew has forever tarnished his glorious

name by proving his own guilt, without establishing the ex-chancellor's innocence, or those of his accomplices, Han of Iceland, Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas and Norbith. I call upon you to declare the six prisoners guilty of high treason and conspiracy in the first degree."

A murmur went through the crowd; the president was about to close the case, when the bishop claimed a moment's attention.

"Learned judges, it is but right that the prisoners' defense should be heard last. Would that they had a more able advocate, for I am old and feeble. What power remains to me I owe to God's mercy. I am surprised at the clerk of the court's stern request. There is nothing proved against my client Schumacker. He can in no way be associated with the miners' rebellion, since my other client, Ordener Guldenlew, declares that he made use of Schumacker's name as a watchword for this purpose. Moreover, he, Ordener Guldenlew, confesses that he alone is guilty of this reprehensible sedition. There is no evidence against Schumacker, and his case should be dismissed. The other prisoners have only been misguided. I therefore recommend them to mercy. They are but like the wandering sheep of the Good Shepherd. And even young Ordener Guldenlew possesses one great merit in the eyes of the

Lord—he confesses his crime. My lords, I pray you, consider that he is at an age when men are apt to stray and sometimes fall, yet God never forsakes them, nor fails to send them help in the time of trouble. Ordener Guldenlew has scarcely attained a fourth of the years which now bear me down. In passing sentence upon him take into consideration his youth and inexperience, and judge not that the life, so lately given him, must be forfeited."

The old man ceased, and again resumed his seat near Ordener, who greeted him with a smile, whilst the judges, at the president's invitation, retired to consider their verdict.

The prisoners, guarded by halberdiers, sat quietly throughout the time their fate was being decided. Schumacker remained with his head bent down, lost in thought ; the giant looked from right to left with silly assurance ; Jonas and Kennybol held their hands clasped in prayer. Norbith, from time to time, stamped the ground, and clanked his chains. Between him and the venerable bishop sat Ordener, his arms crossed, his eyes raised heavenward, listening to his reverence reciting the penitential psalms.

From behind them was heard the noise of the crowd giving vent to their feelings the

moment the judges left. There was the famous captive of Munckholm, the fearful demon of Iceland ; but, above all others, the viceroy's son was the centre of attraction. Amid the confusion of voices, some expressed pity, others only laughter ; and the sounds arose and fell like flames driven by the wind.

The long night hours passed, and the judges still continued their deliberations ; the sentinels paced up and down before the door like two mute phantoms.

At last torches and lamps began to pale and the first rays of the dawn appeared when, amid breathless silence, the president, followed by the judges, resumed their seats on the bench.

The clerk of the court during their absence seemed buried in thought, but on their return he bowed, and then again addressed them.

“ My lord president, what is the result of the judgment which has been passed in the name of the king, without appeal ? We are prepared to listen to it with a religious respect.”

The judge to the right of the president arose, holding a parchment before him.

“ His grace, our noble president, fatigued by the length of the trial, has deputed me, the High Syndic of the Drontheimhus, who

presides over this court, to pass the verdict which has been drawn in the king's name. We are about to fulfil this painful though honorable duty. We must request the audience to keep silent while the king's just sentence is passed."

Then, the high syndic pronounced the following words in a forcible and solemn manner, whilst all hearts beat rapidly :

" In the name of our respected master and legitimate lord, Christian, king ! This verdict is given by us, the judges of the High Court of Justice of the Drontheimhus. We have acted to the best of our belief concerning John Schumacker, State prisoner ; Wilfred Kennybol, Kole mountaineer ; Jonas and Norbith, royal miners ; Han, of Klipstadur, in Iceland ; Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, Knight of Dannebrog ; all accused of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree. Han of Iceland, further accused of assassination, incendiaryism, and brigandage.

" 1. John Schumacker—not guilty.

" 2. Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas and Norbith—guilty. But they are recommended to mercy, as they were misled.

" 3. Han of Iceland is guilty of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree.

" 4. Ordener Guldenlew is guilty of high treason and leze-majesty in the first degree."

The judge paused to take snuff. Ordener gave him a glance of celestial joy.

"John Schumacker, the court absolves you of all participation in this crime and sends you back to your prison.

"Kennybol, Jonas and Norbith, your sentence is reduced to imprisonment for life, and a fine of a thousand crowns each.

"Han of Klipstadur, assassin and incendiary, you will be taken this evening on to the parade at Munckholm, and hanged by the neck until death follows.

"Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, you will be stripped of every rank in the presence of this court, you will be conducted to this same parade, carrying a torch in your hand, where your head will be severed, your body burned, your ashes cast to the winds, your head placed on a pole.

"All may now retire. Such is the sentence rendered by the king's justice."

The high syndic had scarcely finished his funereal discourse, when a piercing cry rang through the court which struck the hearers with greater horror than the judgment itself. The condemned Ordener looked both calm and bright, but at this fearful sound his face became of an ashen hue.

XLIV.

Misfortune makes all equals.

CHARLES NODIER.

The judgment has been given, and nothing now remains but the final stroke to fall. The young man's noble conspiracy has succeeded, his well-beloved will be safe under her father's protection, for Schumacker's life has been saved at the expense of his own.

Let those who have considered this generous Ordener guilty or mad, judge him now, he, who joined the rebels solely to frustrate the plot against Schumacker ; and if powerless to do so, determined to spare him all punishment by taking everything on his own head.

"Alas," thought he, "Schumacker is doubtless guilty, but his long captivity and misfortunes drove him to the crime. Under the circumstance, even such a deed is pardonable. He longed for freedom, and incited this rebellion in order to compass his end. What a fate for my Ethel, if her father were to lose his life on the scaffold. Another

disgrace added to her sorrows, without protection, without assistance; either to remain alone in her captivity, or to wander in the midst of a crowd of enemies.” It was this that made him gladly take the accusation on himself. Can there be greater happiness than in sacrificing one’s self for the sake of the well-beloved, though it were but for a smile or a tear?

He was found among the rebels, told a generous lie; was condemned by the very judges who had accused Schumacker, sentenced to a cruel and ignominious death, and his name forever blasted. But what mattered all this to the young man? He had saved his Ethel’s father.

He is now in chains in a damp cell, where light and air are but faintly admitted through gloomy port-holes. The only food he will ever have for the remainder of his existence is by his side—black bread and a jug of water. Though weighed down in chains from head to foot, he is lost in delightful dreams, and in one hour he realizes more what life is, than another feels in the space of a year.

“Perhaps my memory will not perish with me. I know that, at least, one heart will beat for me, a tear will fall for the blood so freely given. She will, perhaps, regret him who

sacrificed his life for her, and in my loved one's dreams her friend may sometimes find a place. Who can tell what comes after death? Perhaps the soul, delivered from its prison-house, may be allowed to watch over those well-beloved captives here below, and hold some intercourse with them, whereby they may secretly dispense some angelic virtue, and diffuse joy from heaven above."

At the moment of Ordener's great sacrifice he was oppressed with the bitter thought of Schumacker's inveterate hatred. He was haunted by the remembrance of that piercing cry which echoed through the court when sentence was passed on him, for he alone recognized the voice—his Ethel's. And then, should he ever see her again? should he ever hear the voice and press the hand of her for whom he was about to die?

Just then the old rusty hinges grated in their sockets. The young man thought it was the executioner come to do his duty. He was mistaken. The door was thrown open, and Ordener gazed on a pale and wan-looking face. Ordener doubted his eyes and asked himself if he were not already in heaven. It was she—his Ethel!

The young girl threw herself into his arms, kissing the very chains of infamy with her unsullied lips, bedewing his hands with her

tears. She could not speak, but her heart seemed ready to break, and her sobbing prevented her uttering a single word.

He had never known such supreme happiness. He pressed her fondly to him; and no power on earth or in hell could have separated them. His near approaching death intensified his feelings, and he held his Ethel as though it were for all eternity.

He did not ask this angel how she had been able to get to him. She was there, and that was all-sufficient; for he well knew how love could overcome great difficulties.

Both were silent. What is the mere sound of a voice, compared to the inner language of the soul? There are some deep emotions which cannot be expressed.

The young girl at length raised her head from his shoulder.

"Ordener, I am come to save you," said she, in a hopeful tone, although her heart sank within her.

Ordener shook his head, and merely said:

"Save me, Ethel? You deceive yourself; flight is impossible."

"Alas! I know that but too well. The castle is filled with soldiers. Every door is guarded by archers and jailers, who are ever on the watch; but"—here she hesitated—"I can suggest other means."

"No, Ethel, your hopes are in vain; for they will be cruelly dispelled in a few hours' time by a stroke of the axe."

"Oh, pray cease! Ordener! You shall not die. Oh! banish this fearful idea. Yet I would have you picture it in all its horrors to me, that I may complete the sacrifice which insures your safety."

There was something indescribable in the girl's accent, and Ordener looked at her tenderly:

"Your sacrifice! What do you mean?"

She buried her head in her hands, and sobbing, cried in her anguish: "Oh, God!"

With a great effort she recovered herself, and smiled up into his face, like an angel going to the realms above.

"Listen, my Ordener. The scaffold will never be raised. For you can live by giving your promise to marry Ulrica d'Ahlefeld."

"Ulrica d'Ahlefeld! That name in your mouth, my Ethel?"

"Do not interrupt me," continued she, with the calmness of a martyr undergoing torture. "I have come on the part of Countess d'Ahlefeld. You will receive the king's pardon when you have promised to wed the grand chancellor's daughter. I implore you to accede to this, and live for her. I was

chosen as messenger, thinking I should have some influence over you."

"Ethel," replied the condemned man, coldly, "farewell; on leaving my cell, tell them to send the executioner."

She rose, stood pale and trembling before him; then, falling before him on her knees she wrung her hands:

"What have I done to him?" she murmured faintly.

Ordener lowered his eyes and remained silent.

"My lord!" she cried, dragging herself to him, "you do not answer. Will you not give me one word? must I feel there is nothing to live for?"

A tear rolled down the young man's cheek.

"Ethel, you have then ceased to love me!"

"Oh, God," cried the poor girl, wildly pressing his hand; "he tells me I do not love him! You, my Ordener, can you really have said these words?"

"You cannot love me, since you despise me."

He immediately repented this cruel speech. Ethel threw her arms around him, and with heartrending accents, cried:

"Pardon me, my adored Ordener; forgive me, as I forgive you. I despise you! Are you not my pride, my love, my all? Did my

words convey anything but deep love and the greatest respect for you? Alas! for your severity, when I thought to save you, my own Ordener, by sacrificing my whole life for yours."

"Well, then," said the young man, kissing away her tears, "was it not showing but little regard for me when you proposed that I should purchase life at the expense of my oath, my very love itself, and abandon my Ethel, for whose sake I am willing to shed the last drop of my blood?"

A long sigh preceded Ethel's response.

"Ordener, do not judge me hastily. I have greater powers of endurance than women generally have; but from our very dungeon I can see them erecting the scaffold on the Place d'Armes. Oh, Ordener! you cannot picture my grief as I gaze with horror on those men who are slowly preparing for the death of him who is my very life. The Countess d'Ahlefeld, who was seated near me when your fatal sentence was pronounced, came to the dungeon, where I had gone with my father, and suggested that I should make you this proposition. If I wished to save your life, she offered me this odious means of doing so. I must crush all hopes of happiness, renounce you, and give my Ordener up to another, that she may take the poor forsaken

Ethel's only joy. I had to choose between my own irremediable misfortune or your death, and I did not hesitate for a moment."

He respectfully kissed this angel's hand.

"And I do not hesitate either, Ethel. You would not offer me life and Ulrica d'Ahlefeld if you knew why I am really about to die."

"What! there is some mystery?"

"I must keep this secret from you, my Ethel, leaving you in ignorance whether to be grateful or to hate me for my death."

"You wish to die! Oh, God, can it be true that the scaffold is being erected for my Ordener? that no human power can save him from this fate? Pray look upon me, your companion, your very slave, and promise, my well-beloved, not to be angry at my words. Are you sure—answer your Ethel as you would your God—that you could not be happy with this woman, this Ulrica d'Ahlefeld? She is doubtless beautiful, gentle and good, and better far than her for whom you are about to sacrifice your life. My Ordener, my dear friend, do not turn your head aside. You are so young and so noble to perish on the scaffold. You could live with her in some gay city, where you would soon forget this gloomy dungeon. Your days would pass in peace, and you would hear nothing of me. Banish

me from your heart, and even from your thoughts ; but live, Ordener, and leave me here to die. Believe me, when once you are in another's arms you need have no anxiety about me, for I shall not suffer long."

She ceased, for her voice was lost in tears. In her very despair there was still the fixed determination to gain the fatal victory, which to her meant death.

Ordener said to her :

" Ethel, do not speak thus, and let no name but our own pass our lips at such a time as this."

" Alas ! alas ! then all is useless, and you will die ?"

" It must be so. I will gladly perish on the scaffold for your sake ; whereas I should go with horror to the altar with any other woman. Do not press this subject ; you only distress and offend me."

She wept, and still continued to murmur : " Oh, God ! he then must die, and such an infamous death."

The condemned answered, smiling, " Believe me, Ethel, there is less dishonor in such a death as mine than in the terms you propose for purchasing my life."

He turned his eyes away for a moment, and they fell on an old man in priestly garb standing in the door-way.

"What do you want here?" said Ordener, roughly.

"My lord, I came with the envoy of the Countess d'Ahlefeld. You did not perceive me, and I have waited here in silence until you noticed me."

Indeed, Ordener and Ethel had only eyes for each other. The latter in the excitement had quite forgotten her companion.

"I am," continued the old man, "the priest charged . . ."

"I understand," said the young man. "I am ready."

The priest came toward him:

"God is also ready to receive you, my son."

"Reverend sir," answered Ordener, "your face seems familiar to me. I have seen you before."

The minister bowed.

"I remember meeting you, my son, in the Tower of Vyglia. We can both show the fallacy of human promises. You assured me that twelve unfortunate criminals should receive their pardon. I, not knowing you were the viceroy's son, did not credit your words. You, my lord, reckoned that your rank and influence would obtain this concession . . ."

Ordener completed the thought that Athanasius Munder did not dare to finish.

"And now I can obtain no clemency, not even for myself. I thought little of the future, and this assurance has been punished, for time has proved my weakness."

The priest bowed his head.

"God is powerful."

Then, with a kindly look at Ordener, he added :

"God is good."

Ordener, who seemed preoccupied, cried, after a short silence :

"Listen, your reverence; I wish to keep the promise I made to you at Vyglia. When I am no more, go to Berghen, and tell the viceroy, my father, what his son's last wishes were—pardon for your twelve *protégés*—and I am sure he will grant it."

A tear fell down the old man's face.

"My son, how noble of you to think of pardon for others at the very time you so courageously reject it for yourself. I was deeply moved by your refusal, while I could but blame you for such an excess of passionate emotion. I repeated to myself, '*Unde scelus!*' How is it that a man whose feelings so nearly approach perfection, can be guilty of the crime for which you are condemned?"

"Father, I have kept the secret from this angel, and I cannot reveal it to you; only I

would have you believe that the cause of my condemnation is not a crime."

"What? Explain yourself, my son."

"Do not insist," replied the young man, firmly. "Let me carry to the grave the secret which has compassed my death."

"This young man cannot be guilty," murmured the priest.

Then he drew forth a black cross, and placed it on a rough-hewn altar fixed against the damp prison wall. Near the crucifix he placed a lighted iron lamp and an open Bible.

"My son, pray and meditate, I will return in a few hours. Let us now go," said he to Ethel, who had remained silent during this solemn time; "we must leave the prisoner. Time is flying."

She rose radiant and calm, a divine light in her face:

"Your reverence, I cannot go until you have united Ethel Schumacker with Ordener Guldenlew, her betrothed."

She turned to Ordener:

"If you were still of the same rank and influence, and free, I would not unite my wretched fate with yours; but now that my misfortunes cannot affect you, for, like myself, you are a disgraced and oppressed captive, and about to die, I dare hope I may be your





A. Demarete inv.

Ch. Country inv.

companion in death, my Ordener, as I could never have been your companion in life. Your very love must tell you, that when you die, I shall cease to live."

The condemned man fell at her feet and kissed the hem of her garment.

"You, father," continued she to the old man, "will stand us in lieu of parents or family. May this cell be our temple, this stone our altar. Here is my ring, and we shall kneel in God's presence and before you. Pray, bestow your blessing on us, and read the sacred words which unite Ethel Schumacker to Ordener Guldenlew, her lord."

The priest was filled with astonishment and pity at the kneeling figures before him.

"What? My children, what are you doing?"

"Father," said the young girl, "time is flying; God and death are awaiting us."

There are moments when we are governed by some irresistible power. The priest felt this, and, with a sigh, he raised his eyes.

"May the Lord forgive me if I am to blame in making this concession. You love each other, and there remains but little time on earth for you to gratify this feeling. I do not consider I am failing in my duty by giving your love a rightful claim."

He proceeded with the irrevocable ceremony; and after the priest's final blessing, they both arose as husband and wife.

The face of the condemned man shone with a sorrowful joy, for he now fully realized all the bitterness of death, since life offered so much bliss. The young girl felt all the pride of being a young wife.

"Listen to me," said she, "has not the prospect of death brought us happiness, my Ordener, since in life we could never have been united? Would you have me tell you, love, what I shall do? I shall place myself at my dungeon window, in full view of the scaffold, so that our souls may together wing their flight to heaven. If I die before the axe falls, then my body shall await yours, that the same tomb may inclose the bridegroom and his bride. Is it not so, my adored one?"

He pressed her to his heart, and murmured the words which filled his whole soul:

"Ethel, now you are really mine!"

"My children," said the chaplain tenderly, "you must bid each other farewell. It is time."

"Alas!" cried Ethel.

And she threw herself at the condemned man's feet.

"Farewell, my lord, my well-beloved Ordener. Pray give me your blessing."

The prisoner pronounced the touching words, and turned to salute the venerable Athanasius Munder. The old man, likewise, was kneeling before him.

"What would you have of me, father?" asked he, surprised.

The old man humbly replied:

"Your blessing, my son."

"May Heaven bless you and bestow on you as much happiness as your prayers have brought to other mortals," said Ordener in solemn, trembling accents.

Soon the gloomy vault echoed the last farewells, the final embraces were given, soon the heavy bolts were drawn, and the iron door separated the youthful husband from his wife. They, who were about to die, had arranged a meeting place in eternity.

XLV.

To he who will deliver to me Louis Perez,
dead or alive, I will give two thousand écus.

CALDERON—*Louis Perez de Galice.*

“ Baron Vœthaün, colonel of the Munckholm musketeers, which of the soldiers under your command made Han of Iceland prisoner at the Black Pillar? Name him, that he may receive the thousand crowns promised for this capture.”

Thus spoke the president of the court to the colonel of the musketeers. The court was still assembled, for according to ancient custom in Norway, when judgment is given without appeal, the judges must remain on the bench till the sentence be carried out. The giant stands before them, with a rope around his neck, by which in a few hours he will be suspended.

The colonel, who was placed near the clerk’s table, arose, bowed to the bench and the bishop, who had resumed his official seat.



Ch. Country sc.



"My lord judges, the soldier who took Han of Iceland prisoner is here. His name is Toric Belfast, second musketeer in my regiment."

"Let him come," said the president, "and receive the promised reward."

A young soldier, in the uniform of the Munckholm musketeers, stepped forward.

"You are Toric Belfast?" asked the president.

"Yes, your grace."

"You took Han of Iceland prisoner?"

"Yes, by the aid of Saint Beelzebub, may it please your excellency."

A heavy purse was placed on the bench.

"Do you recognize this man as the famous Han of Iceland?" said the president, indicating the enchain'd giant.

"I know my pretty Cattie's face better than that of Han of Iceland, but I swear, by the glory of Saint Belphegor, that if Han of Iceland be anywhere, he is in this great devil's form."

"Draw near, Toric Belfast. Here are the thousand crowns promised by the High Syndic."

The soldier was stepping eagerly forward, when a voice in the crowd exclaimed:

"Musketeer of Munckholm, it was not you who took Han of Iceland prisoner."

"Well, by all the happy devils," cried the soldier. "At the present moment I have nothing but my pipe to offer, but I vow I will hand over ten thousand golden crowns to him who has just given me the denial, if he can prove the truth of his words."

And crossing his arms, he looked with perfect assurance around the audience, and added :

"Let him who has just spoken show himself."

"It was I!" said a short individual, making his way to the centre of the court.

The new-comer was wrapped in matting, made of rush and seal-fur, such as is used by the Greenlanders, which fell from the shoulders, and gave him the appearance of a conical shaped hut. His beard and long bushy hair were black, the little that could be seen of his eyebrows was red, the rest of his face was truly hideous. Neither his arms nor hands were visible.

"Ah, so you are the man?" said the soldier, with a burst of laughter; "and it is you, my fine sir, who had the honor of taking this diabolical giant?"

The little man shook his head, and said with a sort of malicious smile :

"It was I."

At this moment, Baron Vœthaün recognized this singular man as the same mysterious being who at Skongen had given him notice of the rebels' approach. Chancellor d'Ahlefeld saw before him the host of the ruin of Arbar. The clerk of the court knew him as a certain peasant of Oëlmœ, who wore the same kind of matting, and who had shown him Han of Iceland's retreat. These three persons, being separated, were unable to communicate to each other their passing impression, and they were by no means certain of the fact, owing to the individual's different disguises.

"And so it was really you?" said the soldier, ironically. "By the look in your eyes, if it were not for that Greenland costume of yours, I should be inclined to think you were the same odd-shaped dwarf who wanted to quarrel with me at the Spladgest about a fortnight since, the very day they brought in the miner Gill Stadt's corpse."

"Gill Stadt," echoed the little man, shuddering.

"Yes, Gill Stadt," continued the musketeer, indifferently, "the jilted lover of a girl who had been the mistress of one of our comrades, and for whom he died, like a fool."

The little man said sullenly:

"Was there not also, at the Spladgest, the body of an officer belonging to your regiment?"

"Precisely so. I shall ever remember that day, for while at the Spladgest I quite forgot all about the hour of the retreat, and on my return to the fortress I narrowly escaped being degraded. That officer was Captain Dispolsen."

At the mention of this name the clerk of the court immediately arose.

"These two people abuse the patience of the court. We beg the president to put an end to this useless discourse."

"By my Cattie's honor, I wish for nothing better," said Toric Belfast, "provided your lordships will award me the thousand crowns promised for Han, for I made him prisoner."

"You lie," cried the little man.

The soldier felt at his side for his sabre.

"Scoundrel, you are fortunate in being in the presence of justice, for a soldier, even a Munckholm musketeer, must remain unarmed like an old cock."

"The reward is mine," pursued the little man, coldly; "without me you could never take Han of Iceland."

The soldier retorted furiously that he had found Han of Iceland lying semi-conscious on

the battle-field, and had taken him prisoner as he began to recover.

"That is all very well," rejoined his adversary ; "you may have taken him, but it was I who knocked him down. Had I not done so you would never have captured him ; therefore the reward of a thousand crowns belongs to me."

"It is false," replied the soldier. "You never overthrew him. He was struck down by a spirit, who appeared in the skin of some beasts."

"It was I."

"No, no, I."

The president requested silence, and again asked Colonel Voethaün if Toric Belfast had really brought in Han of Iceland prisoner. The reply being in the affirmative, he declared that the soldier was entitled to the reward.

The little man gnashed his teeth, and just as the musketeer eagerly pressed forward to receive the purse, he cried :

"One minute, my lord president. According to the high syndic's decree, this sum belongs to him who should deliver up Han of Iceland."

"Well, then?" said the judges.

Turning toward the giant, the little man exclaimed :

"This man is not Han of Iceland."

A murmur of astonishment ran through the court. The president and the private secretary seemed both greatly agitated.

"No, this money does not belong to that cursed Munckholm musketeer," said the little man, fiercely, "for that man is not Han of Iceland!"

"Halberdiers, seize that madman," cried the president. "He has lost his senses."

The bishop then interposed:

"Honored president, permit me to observe, by your refusal to hear this man you deprive the condemned men here of all chance of escape. I must request that the inquiry continue."

"Reverend bishop, the court is anxious to satisfy you," replied the president, and turning to the giant, "You have sworn, that you are Han of Iceland. Do you still declare the same, now that you are sentenced to death?"

The condemned man answered:

"I swear I am Han of Iceland."

"You hear, my lord bishop?"

The little man shouted at the same time:

"You lie, you Kole mountaineer, you lie. Why persist in bearing a name which will be your destruction? Remember how fatal it has already proved to you."

"I am Han, of Klipstadur, in Iceland," stoically answered the giant, keeping his eyes fixed on the clerk of the court.

The little man approached the Munckholm musketeer, who was listening attentively to this curious scene.

"Kole mountaineer, they say Han of Iceland drinks human blood. If you are he drink it, here is some."

He had scarcely pronounced these words when he stabbed the musketeer to the heart, with a dagger he had concealed beneath the matting, and threw the corpse at the feet of the giant.

The crowd was horror-stricken, the soldiers on guard drew back from the giant, and terrified cries arose on all sides. The little man, quick as lightning, plunged his dagger into the mountaineer, whose identity was now discovered, as he fell on the soldier's body. Throwing aside the matting, wig, and false beard the monster showed himself in all his hideousness, clothed in the skins of beasts. His appearance created greater horror among the spectators than the instrument streaming with the blood of his two victims.

"Ha, ha, judges; where is Han of Iceland?"

"Guards, seize that monster," cried the terrified president.

Han threw his dagger into the hall.

"That is useless to me, as there are no more Munckholm soldiers here."

Thus speaking he gave himself up to the halberdiers without resistance; they had prepared to take him by assault, as they would a fortress, but he quietly gave himself up. He was chained to the prisoners' bench. A litter bore away his victims, one of whom, the mountaineer, still breathed.

It is impossible to picture the terror and indignation of the whole court during this horrible scene. The brigand sat calm and unmoved in the fatal dock. The curiosity of the crowd overcame all other feelings, and their rapt attention kept them quiet.

The venerable bishop arose.

"My lords judges . . ." said he.

The brigand hastily interrupted him.

"Bishop of Drontheim, I am Han of Iceland; do not take the trouble to defend me."

The private secretary arose.

"Noble president . . ."

The monster cut short his words.

"Clerk of the court, I am Han of Iceland; don't trouble yourself to accuse me."

Then, standing there with his feet steeped in blood, he looked ferociously around. Judges, guards, spectators, all were terrified at this man's glance—he, who stood alone, disarmed, and in chains.

"Listen, judges. Do not expect long words from me. I am the demon of Klipstadur. My mother came from that old Iceland, the iceland of volcanoes. It was formerly only a mountain, but a giant falling from heaven crushed in the summit. You hardly want me to tell you about myself. I am a descendant of Ingulphus the Exterminator, whose spirit exists in me. I have committed more murders and created more incendiaries than the whole of you have passed judgments. I have a secret in common with Chancellor d'Ahlefeld. I should delight in drinking all the blood in your bodies. My nature is to hate men, my mission is to injure them. Colonel of the Munckholm musketeers, it was I who warned you that the miners would pass through Black Pillar, as I was certain you would then create great slaughter among them in those defiles. It was I who hurled the blocks of granite on your regiment, crushing a whole battalion, just to avenge my son. Judges, now that my son is dead, I come here in search of death. I am weighed down by Ingulphus' spirit, because I alone can transmit it, and I have no heir. I am tired of life, as I have no successor to whom I can inculcate my principles or show an example. Besides, my thirst is quenched with the blood quaffed; and now here I am, and you can drink mine."

He ceased, and the echo of his fearful words ran through the crowd.

The bishop spoke to him :

“ My son, what made you commit so many crimes ? ”

The brigand laughed.

“ Upon my word, reverend bishop, it was not to enrich myself, like your brother the Bishop of Borglum.¹² Something within me urged me on.”

“ God does not always abide in all His ministers,” humbly replied the old saintly man. “ You insult me, while my wish is to defend you.”

“ Your reverence is only wasting time. Just ask your brother, the Bishop of Scalholt, in Iceland. By Ingulphus ! it would be strange, indeed, if two bishops should watch over my life—one at my cradle and the other at my grave. Bishop, you are an old idiot.”

“ My son, do you believe in God ? ”

“ Why not ? I hope there is a God to blaspheme.”

“ Stop ! wretched man ! You are at the point of death, and yet you refuse to throw yourself at Christ’s feet ! ”

Han of Iceland shrugged his shoulders.

“ If I did, it would be after the style of the policeman of Kole, who kissed the king’s foot, and knocked his majesty over.”

The bishop resumed his seat deeply moved.

"Come, judges," continued Han of Iceland, "what are you hesitating about? If I were in your place and you in mine, I would not keep you so long waiting for your sentence of death."

The judges retired, but returned after a short deliberation. The president read a sentence in a loud voice which, according to the formula, condemned Han of Iceland *to be hanged by the neck till death should ensue.*

"That is all right," said the brigand. "Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, I know enough about you to hang you, but live on, as you cause men so much harm. Well, I am sure now of not going to Nysthiem."¹³

The private secretary of the court ordered the guards to place Han in the Lion of Sleswig dungeon, while a cell was prepared for him adjoining the Munckholm musketeers' quarters.

"In the quarters of the Munckholm musketeers!" repeated the monster, with a growl of joy.

XLVI.

Meanwhile the corpse of Ponce de Léon, which laid near the fountain, having been disfigured by the sun, was stolen by Alpuxare's Moors who carried it to Grenada.

E. H. —*Le Captif d'Ochali.*

Meanwhile, before dawn, just about the time Ordener's sentence was being passed at Munckholm, Oglypiglap, former assistant to Benignus Spiagudry, and now his successor as keeper of the Drontheim Spladgest, was awakened by several heavy knocks from outside. He rose reluctantly, swearing at the dazzling light of his brass lantern and the dampness of the mortuary, and opened the door to those who had allowed him so little repose.

Some fishermen presented themselves, bearing a litter covered with rushes and seaweed, on which a body lay, that they had found in Lake Sparbo.

They deposited their burden in the interior of the edifice, and Oglypiglap gave them a receipt for the same, in order that they should claim their reward.



C. Ch. Country sc.

Démarest inv



D'Incarceau, Inv.

Ch. Country sc

When alone in the Spladgest he began to strip the corpse of a man remarkable for his length and thinness. The first thing he noticed when he raised the sail in which it was wrapped, was an immense wig.

"Certainly, I have seen this wig before. Why, it belonged to that elegant young Frenchman ; and here are Postilion Cramner's top-boots, the poor fellow who was crushed under his horses. What the devil does this mean ? Here is Professor Syngramtax's black coat, the old scholar who lately drowned himself. Who can this new-comer be, dressed up in the clothes of all my old acquaintances ?"

He examined the face, but it had lost all form and feature. He searched the pockets, and found a slimy old parchment. Wiping it carefully with his leather apron, he succeeded in reading these half-effaced words :

"Rudbeck Saxon, the grammarian ; Arngrim, Bishop of Holum. There are only two counties in Norway, Larvig, and Jarlberg, and one barony. There are silver mines at Kongsberg ; loadstone, asbestos at Sund-Moer ; amethysts at Guldbranshal ; chalcedony, agates, jasper, in the Faroe Isles. At Noukahiva, in time of famine, men eat their wives and children. Thormodus Thorfceus ; Isleif, Bishop of Scalholt, the first Iceland

historian. Mercury played at chess with the moon, and gained the seventy-second part of a day. Maelstrom, a whirlpool. *Hirundo, hirudo.* Cicero; chick-peas: glory. Frode, the scholar. Odin consulted the head of Mimer, the sage. (Mahomet and his pigeon. Sertorius and his goat.) The better the soil, less the gypsum."

"I cannot believe my eyes," cried Ogly-piglap, letting the parchment fall. "Why, this is in the writing of my old master, Benignus Spiagudry."

Then, examining the corpse more closely, he recognized the long hands, the scanty hair, and the body of the unfortunate man.

"They were not far wrong," thought he, shaking his head, "when they accused him of sacrilege and necromancy. Satan must have carried him off, and drowned him in Lake Sparbo. Who would have imagined that Dr. Spiagudry, who kept others so long here, in his hotel for the dead, should one day be brought here himself."

The philosophical little Laplander was placing the body on one of the six granite slabs, when he observed that some heavy weight was attached with a leather strap to the unfortunate Spiagudry's neck.

"It is most likely a stone, fastened to his neck by the devil when he pitched him into the lake," murmured he.

He was mistaken, for it proved to be a small iron casket, upon which on close inspection, after having cleaned it, he noticed a lock covered with an escutcheon.

"There is doubtless some deviltry in this box," said he. "This man was a sorcerer, and committed sacrilege. I had better take the casket to the bishop. There may be a demon inside."

Then, leaving the corpse in the mortuary, he carried the casket to the bishop's palace, muttering some prayers on the way, as a safeguard against the contents of the terrible box he was carrying.

XLVII.

Is it a man or an infernal spirit who speaks thus? What unlucky spirit torments you? Show me the implacable enemy which has possession of your heart.

MATURIN.

Han of Iceland and Schumacker were both confined in the dungeon of Sleswig. The ex-chancellor, though proved innocent of the crime, was nevertheless dwelling bitterly on his fate, as he walked slowly up and down. The condemned brigand, guarded on all sides, only laughed at his chains.

The two prisoners had long been silently observing each other, innately knowing they were both enemies to mankind.

"Who are you?" at last inquired the ex-chancellor of the brigand.

"I will soon tell you my name," answered the other, "that you may shun me. I am Han of Iceland."

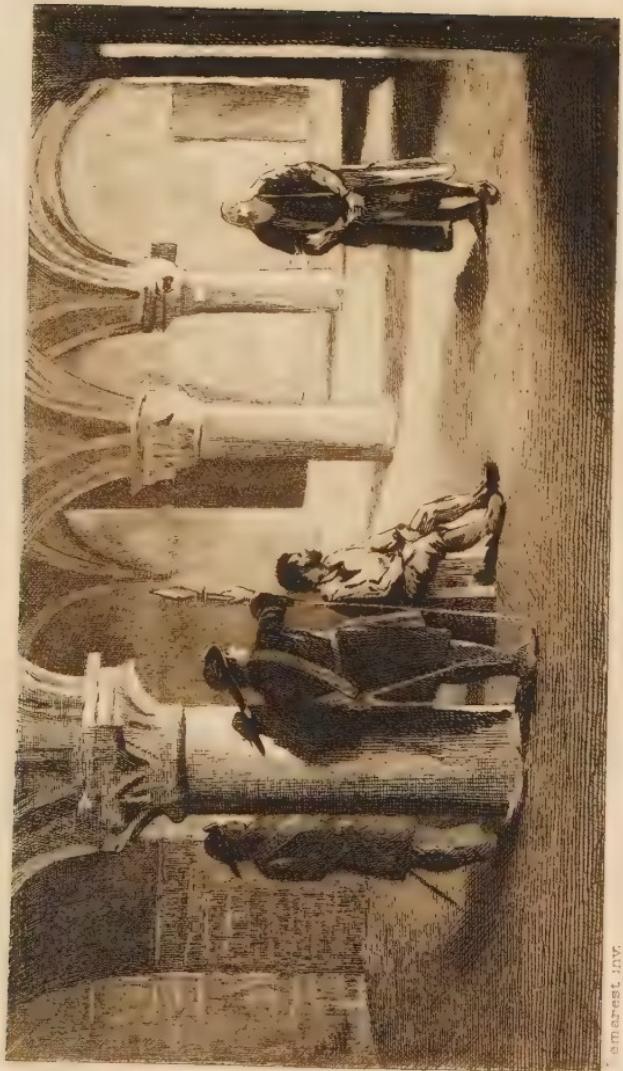
"Take my hand," said he.

Schumacker stepped towards him.

"Do you want me to devour it?"

C. Feuvre sc.





EMERSON LIV.

"Han of Iceland," answered Schumacker,
"I like you because you detest mankind."

"That's why I hate you!"

"Listen to me. Like yourself, I hate men; because I have tried to benefit them, and they returned me evil for good."

"You cannot abhor them as I do, for they have benefited me, and I have returned evil for good."

Schumacker shuddered at the expression of the monster's face. He could have no bond of sympathy with a nature like that.

"Yes," continued the ex-chancellor, "I execrate men because I have found them knaves, ungrateful and cruel. It is to them I owe all my misfortunes."

"So much the better. I owe them all my happiness in life."

"What happiness?"

"The joy of feeling their yet breathing form shrink, as I tear the flesh to pieces with my teeth, and their warm blood refreshing my parched lips. What can exceed the pleasure of smashing human beings against the edge of rocky corners, and hearing the victims' cries mingling with the sound of the crushing bones? Those are the enjoyments men have given me."

Schumacker was horror-stricken, and stepped back from the monster toward whom he

had lately approached with such pride, thinking he had met with a kindred spirit. He now buried his face in his hands, crying with shame and indignation. The tears were not shed on account of the human race; but he was filled with remorse for the feelings he had himself shown. His noble heart was humiliated at the hatred he had evinced toward men when he saw it reflected in such a creature as Han of Iceland.

"Well," said the monster, laughing, "what does mankind's enemy say now? Do you still dare to boast that you resemble me?"

The old man shuddered.

"Oh, God! rather than hate them as you do, I would prefer to love them."

The guards came forward to take the monster into a more secure cell. Schumacker, left to himself, sat lost in thought, but he was no longer an enemy to mankind.





XLVIII.

Do not chastise me, for my crime is his crime.

A. DE VIGNY.

The fatal hour had arrived. The sun had scarcely risen above the horizon, the guards were doubled in Munckholm Castle, and before every door fierce sentinels paced to and fro. The uproar in the town reached the gloomy fortress, itself the scene of great excitement. The crape-muffled drums were slowly beating, the cannon from the tower rolled forth at intervals, and the heavy dungeon bell tolled with deep and prolonged tones. Boats came from every point to the formidable rock, heavily charged with passengers.

The crowd kept steadily increasing on the parade, surrounding the scaffold, which was also draped in black, and well guarded by a detachment of the military. A man in red serge was promenading the fatal platform, occasionally resting on his axe, and trying the block to test its firmness. Torches were

burning in front of the scaffold, before which a stake was placed, bearing a signboard engraven with these words, *Ordener Guldenlew, traitor.* From the Place d'Armes could be seen, floating above the donjon of Sleswig, a large black flag.

Meanwhile Ordener reappeared in the assembled court, the bishop alone being absent, as his office for the defense was over.

The viceroy's son was in black, wearing the collar of the Order of the Dannebrog. His face was pale, but it bore the same haughty expression. The condemned man stood alone, as he had been summoned before the chaplain, Athanasius Munder, had returned to the cell.

Although Ordener was prepared for the sacrifice, still he could not help bitterly regretting his fate. Ethel's husband would have chosen a far different ending than the grave now that he was united to his love. Now that the time had arrived when he would shortly be beyond all the prayers and dreams which had beguiled his prison hours, he trusted in God and love to give him strength to bear the trial.

The crowd, wrapped in deep attention, was more moved than the condemned man himself. His rank and horrible fate awakened both feelings of envy and pity. Many were

present at his punishment without knowing the crime for which he was about to suffer. It is strange that men should take pleasure in witnessing the sight of human agony. They eagerly watched the features of the one about to die, as though expecting that the wretched man's eyes would express some revelation from heaven or hell, or that death would cast its shadow over him. They go to see how a man can look when all hope has fled—this being, full of strength and health, who breathes and lives like themselves, yet who in a few short moments will cease to breathe, to live. He has never injured them, and they pity him ; but none will venture to help the unfortunate wretch, now on the verge of death, without being permitted the final gasp, and who is shortly to be struck off at a single blow—this life, which society cannot give, yet ruthlessly takes away, with all the pomp of judicial murder, tending only to inflame the imagination of the spectators. Time, with its indefinite delays, condemns us all to death, yet it is a strange and grievous sight to watch the unfortunate being who knows his hour is nigh.

Ordener was brought into court that he might be stripped of his rank and honors, previous to mounting the scaffold. The assembly was scarcely restored to calmness,

when the president, commanding that a respectful silence should be maintained, ordered the condemned man to remain before him on bended knee, while he read in a clear, distinct tone the following words from the archives of the Knights of the Dannebrog:

“Christian, by the grace and pity of the Almighty King of Denmark, Norway, of the Vandals and of the Goths; Duke of Sleswig, Holstein, Stormarie, and of Dytmarsa; Count of Oldenburg and of Delmenhurst; also on the proposition of the grand chancellor, created Count of Griffenfeld (here the president spoke so rapidly that the name was scarcely heard), Knight of the royal Order of the Dannebrog, founded by our illustrious ancestor, Saint Waldemar.

“In memory of the Dannebrog standard, having been sent direct from heaven to our blessed kingdom.

“It would be against the precepts of this Divine order if one of its knights were allowed to abuse with impunity the honor and holy laws, both of Church and State.

“We order, on his knees before God, any knight of the order, who has given his soul to the devil by means of felony or treachery, to be publicly censured by a judge, and then forever degraded of his rank as Knight of our royal Order of Dannebrog.”

The president closed the book.

"Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, Knight of Dannebrog, you have been guilty of high treason, a crime for which your head is to be severed, your body burned, and your ashes cast to the winds. Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, you have rendered yourself unworthy to rank amid the Knights of Dannebrog ; therefore prepare yourself, for I am about to publicly degrade you in the name of the king."

Resting his hand on the book of the Order, the president was going to pronounce the fatal formula on Ordener, who still remained calm and unmoved, when a door to the right of the bench was thrown open, and an usher announced his reverence the Bishop of the Drontheimhus.

It was indeed he, the bishop, entering the hall suddenly accompanied by another ecclesiastic on whom he leaned.

"Stop ! my lord president," cried he, with a force beyond his years. "Stop ! May Heaven be praised ! I have arrived in time."

The assembly listened with renewed attention, foreseeing that some fresh event was about to occur.

The president angrily turned towards the bishop.

"Your reverence must allow me to remark that your presence is useless here. The

condemned man is on the point of being degraded, and his last moments are at hand."

"Beware," said the bishop, "of touching him who is guiltless in the sight of God. This condemned man is innocent!"

The crowd gave vent to their astonishment, and their loud exclamations were only exceeded by the terrified cries of the president and the private secretary.

"Yes, tremble, judges!" continued the bishop, before the president had recovered his presence of mind; "tremble! for you were about to shed innocent blood."

Whilst the president's emotion was subsiding, Ordener was in consternation, lest his generous plan had been frustrated by the discovery of certain proofs against Schumacker.

"My lord bishop," said the president, "if this criminal affair pass from hand to hand, it will escape us altogether. Do not trust to appearances. If Ordener Guldenlew be innocent, who, then, is guilty?"

"I will soon make your grace acquainted with the fact," replied the bishop, then pointing to an iron casket an attendant was carrying: "Noble lords, in delivering your judgments you were utterly in the dark, but light will dawn when you have seen the contents of that casket."

The president, and the private secretary, and Ordener, all seemed equally struck with emotion at the sight of the mysterious box. The bishop continued :

“ Noble judges, hear me. On entering our palace this day, in order to rest from the fatigues of the night, and to pray for those condemned men, this sealed box was handed to us. The keeper of the Spladgest had left it at our palace with the injunction that it doubtless contained some satanic mystery, as he found it on the dead body of that sacrilegious Benignus Spiagudry, whose corpse was brought in from Lake Sparbo.”

Ordener listened with renewed attention. The audience maintained strict silence. The president and the secretary bent their heads like criminals. Their audacity and cunning had completely vanished. All power at times forsakes the wicked.

“ After having blessed the casket,” pursued the bishop, “ and broke the seal itself, stamped with the Griffenfeld arms, this box did, indeed, contain a diabolical secret, the purport of which you have now the opportunity of judging, honored lords. I must ask for your deepest attention, for it is a question of men’s blood, and the Lord weighs every drop in the scale.”

Then, opening the casket, he brought forth a parchment, on which was written the following inscription :

“I, Blaxham Cumbysulsum, doctor, now at the point of death, do intrust to Captain Dispolsen, of Copenhagen, agent to the former Count of Griffenfeld, the following document, written entirely by Turiaf Musdæmon, assistant to the chancellor, Count d’Ahlefeld. The said captain may make what use he pleases with the same. I pray God to pardon all my crimes. At Copenhagen, the eleventh day of January, one thousand six hundred and ninety-nine.

“CUMBYSULSUM.”

The secretary made an effort to speak, but he trembled so in every limb that he could not utter a syllable. The bishop handed the parchment to the pale and agitated president.

“What do I see here?” cried he, spreading the document before him. “‘*Letter to the noble Count d’Ahlefeld, showing what means should be taken to rid himself legally of Schumacker’*—! I swear, reverend bishop . . .”

The parchment fell from the president’s hands.

“Read on, read on, my lord,” said the bishop. “I doubt not your unworthy servant has made use of your name in the same way he did that of the unfortunate Schumacker. Only see what your unchristianlike hatred brought down on your disgraced predecessor.

One of the courtiers plotted to ruin him in your name, hoping, doubtless, to find favor in your grace's eyes."

These words plainly proved to the president that the bishop knew the contents of the box, but evidently he did not suspect him. Ordener breathed more freely as he clearly saw that Schumacker's innocence and his own would be proved at the same time. He wondered at the curious freak of fortune, which impelled him to go in pursuit of this formidable brigand for the iron casket, when his guide had it in his own possession. In fact, he was running after the casket which was in reality following him. He pondered on the strangeness of events, and the fatal box that had led to his ruin was now to prove the means of saving him.

The president, having recovered his self-possession, read a long letter, wherein Musdœmon detailed the abominable plot that he had so thoroughly carried out. Count d'Ahlefeld showed signs of the utmost indignation, in which the audience freely shared. Several times the clerk rose to defend himself, but he was universally hooted, and when the document came to a close the people cried with horror.

"Halberdiers, seize that man!" exclaimed the president, indicating his private secretary.

The villain, helpless and speechless, left his post of honor to take his seat on the bench of infamy, amidst the howls of the populace.

"My lords judges," said the bishop, "may tremble, and yet you have cause for rejoicing. The facts you have just heard can now be verified by our honored brother, Athanasius Munder, here present, the prison chaplain of this royal city."

It was, indeed, Athanasius Munder, who, at a sign from the president, rose, and, bowing to the bishop and the bench, said :

"What I am about to assert is strictly true. May Heaven punish me if I utter a word with any but the best intent. When I visited the viceroy's son this morning in his cell, I felt the young man was not guilty, although your lordships had convicted him on his own confession. A few hours ago I was called upon to administer the spiritual consolation to the unhappy mountaineer who was so cruelly assassinated before your eyes, and whom you had condemned, honored lords, as Han of Iceland. This is the confession he made to me: 'I am not Han of Iceland; I have been well punished for taking the name. I was paid for being his substitute by Musdoemon, the clerk of the court of chancery, who supervised the whole of the insurrection, under the name of Hacket. He is the originator and sole cause

of all.' Then the mountaineer asked me for my blessing, and implored me to repeat his words to the court. As God is my witness, this is nothing but the truth. May I be the means of saving the innocent, and punishing the guilty."

The priest ceased, and again bowed to the bishop and the judges.

"Your grace sees," said the bishop, "that one of my clients was not far from wrong when he distinguished the resemblance between Hacket and your clerk."

"Turiaf Musdoemon," said the president, "what have you to say in your defense?"

Musdoemon looked at his master in a way which terrified him. All his assurance had returned. After a moment's hesitation, he replied :

"Nothing, my lord."

The president then continued, in a strained and faint voice :

"You plead guilty, then, to the crime with which you are charged? You are the author of a conspiracy both against the State and an individual named Schumacker?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Musdoemon.

The bishop rose.

"My lord president, that there may be no doubt in this affair, will your grace ask the accused if he had any accomplices?"

"Accomplices!" repeated Musdœmon.

He seemed to reflect for a moment. A horrible embarrassment shone in the president's countenance.

"No, my lord bishop," said he at last.

The president looked toward him evidently greatly relieved.

"No, I never had accomplices," continued Musdœmon more forcibly. "I was the inventor and promoter of the whole plot, instigated by one motive—my attachment to my master, by this means hoping to ruin his enemy, Schumacker. My master was ignorant of the conspiracy."

The president and the clerk again exchanged glances full of meaning.

"Your grace," said the bishop, "must now be aware that, as Musdœmon had no accomplices, Ordener Guldenlew cannot be guilty."

"Reverend bishop, if he were not so, why did he plead guilty?"

"My lord president, why did that mountaineer persist in calling himself Han of Iceland, even at the peril of his life? God alone knows what exists at the bottom of our hearts."

Ordener spoke.

"Your lordship, now that the real culprit is discovered, I may confess that I falsely

accused myself, in order to save Ex-Chancellor Schumacker's life, for by his death his daughter would have been left without a protector."

The president bit his lips.

"We now ask the court," said the bishop, "to proclaim our client Ordener's innocence."

The president signed in the affirmative, and the high syndic requested that the examination of the casket should be proceeded with. It was found to contain nothing except Schumacker's vouchers and title-deeds, some few letters of the Munckholm prisoner to Captain Dispolsen, in which he expressed himself bitterly, but by no means in a culpable way likely to create alarm, unless it were to Chancellor d'Ahlefeld.

The judges, meanwhile, were deliberating, but shortly came to a decision. While the crowd on the parade watched in anxious expectation, the executioner walked carelessly up and down the scaffold, awaiting the condemned man. The president's voice was scarcely audible as he pronounced the judgment which condemned to death Turiaf Musdœmon, and restored to Ordener Guldenlew his former position, with all its honors, titles, and privileges.

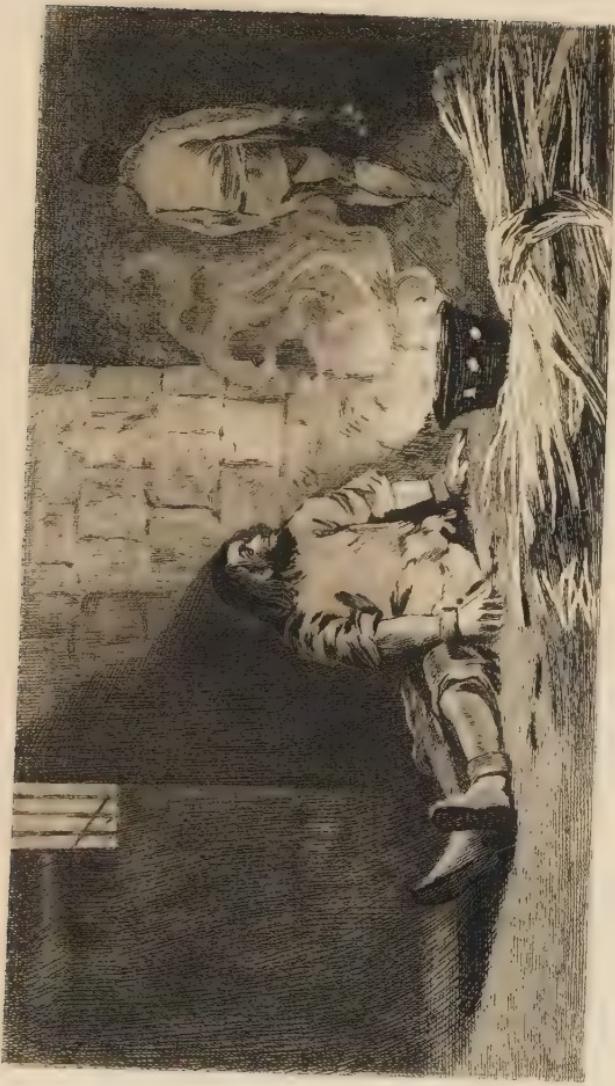
XLIX.

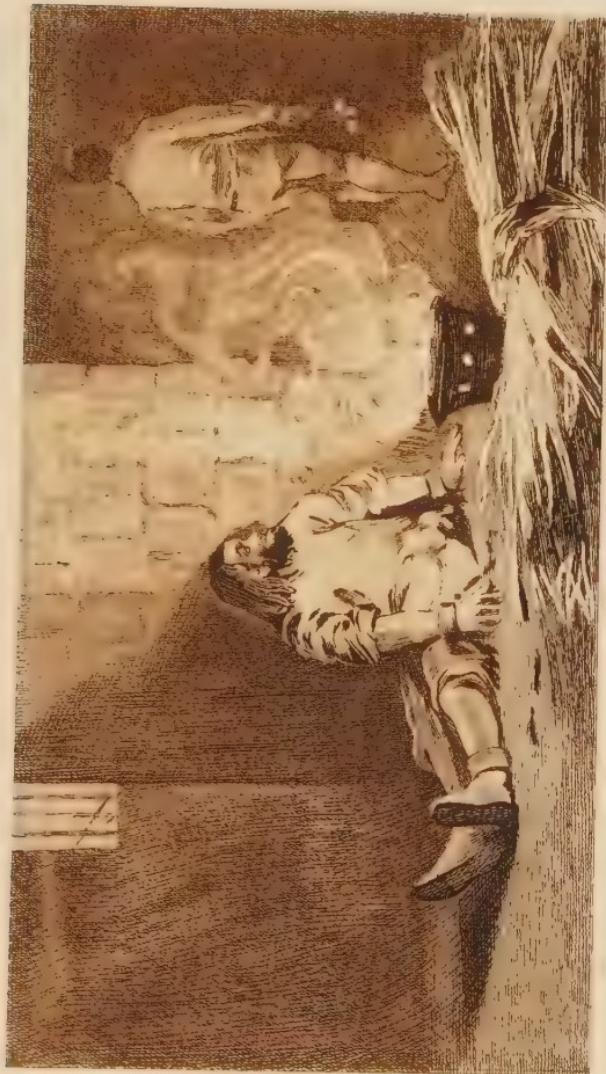
For how much will you sell me your carcase,
knavé? I will give you, upon my honor, a
golden ducat.

A MYSTERY—*Saint Michel à Satan.*

What remained of the regiment of Munckholm musketeers was lodged in its old barracks in the heart of the fortress, surrounding a large square yard. According to custom, all doors were barricaded at night, and none of the soldiers were absent, except the sentinels on duty in the various towers, and those stationed in front of the military prison, which adjoined the barracks. The prison, the safest and best guarded one in Munckholm, was chosen for the two condemned men, who were to be hanged in the morning—Han of Iceland and Musdœmon.

Han of Iceland is lying in chains on the ground of his cell, with his head resting on a stone. A faint glimmer shone through the iron grating in the oaken door, which separates his cell from his keeper's room, whence he could hear them swearing and laughing by turns, to the sound of empty bottles and the





rattling of dice as they cast them on the drums. The monster silently bit his chains, stretched forth his limbs in all directions.

Suddenly he raised his voice and called, a jailer presented himself at the barred opening.

"What do you want?" said he to the brigand.

"Companion, I am cold; my stone couch is hard and damp. Give me some straw to lie on, and a little fire to warm me."

"Well, it is only fair," said the jailer, "that a poor devil who is going to be hanged should have his comforts, even though it be the devil himself. I will bring you what you want. Have you any money?"

"No," replied the brigand.

"What! Do you mean to tell me that you, the most famous robber in Norway, have not some wretched golden ducats in your money bag?"

"No," answered the brigand.

"A few royal écus?"

"No, I tell you."

"Not even some miserable ascalins?"

"No, no, nothing. Not even enough to buy a rat's skin or a man's soul."

The jailer shrugged his shoulders.

"That is different," said he. "You ought not to complain; your cell is not half as cold as the one you will rest in to-morrow. You

won't notice the hardness of your bed then I vow."

Thus saying the jailer withdrew, followed by the monster's curses, who continued to roll his chains about with such violence, that some of the links gave way, thus reducing the rattling sound.

The oaken door was thrown open, and a tall man in red serge entered, carrying a dark lantern. He was accompanied by the warder, who had refused the prisoner's request. The latter was now perfectly quiet.

"Han of Iceland," said the man in red, "I am Nychol Orugix, the Drontheimhus executioner. To-morrow, at the break of day, I am to have the honor of hanging your excellency by the neck to a beautiful new gibbet, just erected in Drontheim square."

"Are you quite sure that you will hang me?" replied the brigand.

The executioner laughed.

"I wish you were as sure of Jacob's ladder to heaven as you are of Nychol Orugix's ladder up to the gibbet."

"Indeed!" said the monster, with a malicious look.

"I repeat to you, master brigand, that I am executioner of the province!"

"If I were any man but what I am, I should wish to be you."

"I cannot say as much," said the hangman, highly flattered, and proudly rubbing his hands together. "You are right, my friend, ours is a noble profession. Ah, how well my hand can test the weight of a man's head."

"Have you ever drank blood?" asked the brigand.

"No, but I have often shed it."

"Have you ever devoured the entrails of a living little child yet?"

"No; but I have crushed human bones in the boot, wrenched limbs out of their sockets on the wheel, tortured the still breathing body with red-hot pincers, dried up the blood in the open veins by means of molten lead or boiling oil, and I have notched steel saws on many of those whose skulls I have previously laid bare."

"Yes," said the brigand, with a sigh, "you also have your pleasures."

"Well, although you are Han of Iceland, I can say that I have caused more souls to take their flight than you have, and that without counting yours to-morrow."

"That is, supposing I have one. Now, executioner of the Drontheimhus, do you for one moment believe that you can separate the soul of Ingulphus from Han of Iceland's body without forfeiting your own life?"

The executioner shouted with laughter.

"Ah, indeed! we shall see to-morrow."

"We shall see!" retorted the brigand.

"Come," said the hangman, "I have not come here to talk about your soul, but about your body. Now listen to me. After death your body rightfully belongs to me, but the law gives you the privilege of selling it to me. Now, what do you want for it?"

"What do I want for my own corpse?" said the brigand.

"Yes; and be reasonable."

Han of Iceland turned to the jailer:

"Comrade, tell me what you charge for a bundle of straw and a little fire?"

The jailer reflected for a moment:

"Two golden ducats," answered he.

"Well," said the brigand to the hangman, "you will have to pay me two golden ducats for my corpse."

"Two golden ducats, indeed!" cried the headsman. "That is horribly dear. Two whole golden ducats for a vile body. No, certainly, I'll not give you that sum."

"Then you won't have it," quietly answered the monster.

"Well, your corpse will be thrown into the common sewer, instead of forming an ornament to the Royal Museum at Copenhagen, or being placed among the curiosities at Berghen."

"What does it matter?"

"Why, long after your death people will flock to see your skeleton, exclaiming : '*There are the remains of the famous Han of Iceland.*' Your bones will be carefully polished, and kept together with brass pins. You will be put under a glass case, which will be dusted every day. Instead of such honors as these, think of the fate which awaits you if you refuse to sell me your corpse. You will be left to decay in some charnel-house, to furnish food for worms and vultures."

"Well ! I shall only resemble the living, who are worried by lesser creatures, and become the prey of larger ones."

"Two golden ducats !" muttered the executioner, viciously ; "what exorbitant terms ! if you do not lower your price, my dear Han of Iceland, we cannot do business together."

"This is the first and probably the last sale I shall effect in my life, so I am naturally anxious to make a good bargain."

"Remember, I can soon make you repent your obstinacy. To-morrow you will be entirely in my power."

"And so you think?"

The monster uttered these words in a significant tone, which passed unnoticed by the executioner.

"Yes ; there is a certain way of fixing the slip-knot. There, if you will only

be reasonable, I will hang you in a better fashion."

"I care but little how you may twist my neck to-morrow," retorted the monster, jeeringly.

"Come, won't you be satisfied with two royal crowns? What is the use of them to you?"

"Ask your comrade there," said the brigand, pointing to the jailer. "He wants two golden ducats for a bundle of straw and a little fuel."

"By St. Joseph's saw!" said the executioner, ill-naturedly, "it is awful to ask weight in gold for some paltry firing and some vile straw. Two ducats."

The jailer replied sharply :

"I ought to be praised for not asking four. It is all very well for you to talk, Master Nychol, but you are a regular screw. Fancy refusing a poor prisoner two golden ducats for his corpse, when you will sell it for twenty ducats, at least, to some scholar or to a doctor."

"I have never paid more than fifteen ascalins," said the hangman.

"Yes, that may be, for the body of a paltry thief, or a wretched Jew; but every one knows that you can demand any price for Han of Iceland's body."

Han of Iceland shrugged his shoulders.

"What business is it of yours?" said Orugix, roughly. "Do I interfere with your pilferings, when you rob the prisoners of their clothes and jewels, and mix dirty water with their weak soup? Do I say a word when you torture them to extract money? No, I will not pay two golden ducats."

"No straw and no fuel for less than two golden ducats," replied the jailer, obstinately.

"No corpse for less than two golden ducats," calmly added the brigand.

After a moment's silence, the executioner, with a stamp of the foot, exclaimed :

"Come, I must be off; time flies, and I am wanted elsewhere."

He took from his vest a leather pouch, he opened it slowly as though regretfully.

"There, cursed demon of Iceland, take your two ducats. Satan won't give as much for your soul as I am paying for your body."

The brigand seized the golden pieces, which the jailer tried to grasp.

"Not quite so fast, companion; first hand me what I bargained for."

The jailer went out, and soon returned with a bundle of fresh straw and a caldron full of burning coals, which he placed near the condemned man.

"I am satisfied," said the brigand, throwing him the two ducats. "That shall warm

me to-night. By the by, is not my cell close to the Munckholm musketeers' barracks?"

"Yes, you are right," answered the jailer.

"What quarter is the wind in?"

"In the east, I think."

"That will do," said the brigand.

"What are you driving at, comrade?" asked the jailer.

"Nothing," answered the brigand.

"Farewell, comrade, till early to-morrow morning."

"Yes, till to-morrow," replied the brigand.

And the noise of the heavy closing door prevented the executioner and his companion from hearing the wild laughter which followed these mocking words.

Henri Leort a.





L.

Do you hope to end up with another sin ?

ALEX. SOUMET.

Let us now take a glance at the other cell adjoining the musketeers' barracks, where our old acquaintance Turiaf Musdœmon was imprisoned.

It seems astonishing that Musdœmon, so replete with cunning and artifice, should readily confess his crime before the court in which he had been condemned, and should so generously withhold the part his ungrateful master, Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, had taken throughout. One thing was certain—Musdœmon was in no way changed. This seeming generosity was only a further proof of his wonderful ability. When he knew that his infernal machinations were discovered, he was completely dumfounded ; but this feeling soon passed off. He plainly perceived that, as he had no chance of ruining his former victims, he must take the best means of saving himself. He saw but two ways of doing so—either to cast the whole blame on Count

d'Ahlefeld for his share in the crime, or to take all the consequences on his own shoulders. An ordinary person would have decided on the first course, but Musdoemon chose the second. The chancellor was a chancellor, and there was nothing really compromising in the documents. It was otherwise with the clerk. The proofs against him were overwhelming. The looks which the latter had exchanged with the president also helped to determine him, and he felt assured Count d'Ahlefeld would effect his escape; not from gratitude for past assistance, but in hopes of future services.

He paced his dimly lighted cell, fully convinced that he would be set free that night. He examined this old stone dungeon, which had been constructed in the days of some of the ancient monarchs, whose names were lost to history. The culprit was astonished to find himself on a wooden flooring, that echoed every step, as though it were placed over some cavity. He noticed a large iron ring in the arched roof, from which an old piece of rope was dangling. As time passed, he listened impatiently to the tower clock striking the different hours, which echoed dismally through the weary watches of the night.

At length he heard footsteps approaching, his heart beat with hope. The enormous lock

creaked, the bolts moved, and the chains fell ; then as the door opened, his face beamed with joy.

The same individual in scarlet we left with Han, now entered with a coil of rope in his hand. He was followed by four halberdiers, in black uniform, and fully armed with swords and pikes.

Musdœmon was still in his legal wig and gown, which evidently had an imposing effect on the man in red, who immediately bowed respectfully, according to custom.

" My lord," said he, hesitatingly to the prisoner, " is it with your worship that we have to do business ? "

" Yes, yes," replied Musdœmon, hoping this polite address was the prelude to his release, for he had not perceived the style of his visitor's costume.

" You call yourself," said the man, fixing his eyes on the open parchment before him, " Turiaf Musdœmon ? "

" Precisely ; you have been sent by the grand chancellor ? "

" Yes, your excellency."

" Do not fail to express my gratitude to his grace, after you have carried out your orders."

The man in red looked astonished.

" Your—gratitude ! "

"Yes, certainly, my friends; for I probably cannot do so myself for some time to come."

"'Probably'!" echoed the man, ironically.

"And you quite understand," pursued Musdoemon, "that I must not show myself ungrateful for so great a service."

"By the cross of the penitent thief," cried the other, with a hoarse laugh, "to hear your worship, any one would think that the chancellor was bestowing a real favor on you."

"No doubt about it. After all, he is only rendering me strict justice."

"Strict justice it may be. You do then allow that it is strict justice? This is the first time during the twenty years I have been in office that I have heard such an avowal. Come, my lord, all these words are but a waste of time. Are you ready?"

"I am," said Musdoemon joyfully, making for the door.

"Wait, wait a moment," said the man in red, dropping his coil of rope.

Musdoemon stopped.

"What is all that rope for?"

"Your worship has every reason to put that question. I have certainly too much rope by half. At the trial I thought I should have more criminals to pass through my hands."

Thus speaking the man uncoiled his rope.

"Now, let us hasten," said Musdœmon.

"Your worship is in a great hurry; would you not like to say a prayer or two?"

"No other than the one I have already said to you—tender my best thanks to his grace. For God's sake, do not linger here," added Musdœmon. "I am anxious to leave. Have we very far to go?"

"Far to go?" repeated the man in red, taking his measurement of the rope. "The length of the route cannot greatly fatigue your worship, as it ends here."

Musdœmon shuddered.

"What do you mean?"

"What do you mean yourself?" returned the other.

"Oh, God!" exclaimed the horror-stricken Musdœmon, now dimly aware of the truth.

"Who are you?"

"I am the hangman."

The poor wretch trembled like a parched leaf in the wind.

"Have you not come to aid my escape?" murmured he, almost inaudibly.

The hangman shouted with laughter.

"Yes, indeed, I have come to help you to the spirit land, whence no one, I vow, will ever call for you."

Musdœmon threw himself on the ground.

"Mercy! mercy! pray have pity on me!"

"By my faith," said the hangman coldly, "this is the first time such a request has been made on me. Do you take me for the king?"

The miserable man, who was lately so joyful, crawled in the dust, rolled his head from side to side, and amidst his tears and sobs he kissed the hangman's feet.

"Come, be still," said the man. "I never yet saw the black gown humble itself before my red blouse."

He gave the pleader a kick.

"Now, comrade, pray God and the saints for help; they will pay more heed to you than I shall."

Musdœmon remained kneeling, with his head buried in his hands, crying bitterly. By stretching himself, the hangman had succeeded in running the rope through the ring under the arch. He gave it a double twist, to make it firm, and prepared a slip-knot at the other end.

"I have finished." When these horrible preparations were complete, he said: "Have you also ended with life?"

"No," answered Musdœmon, rising; "this must be some terrible mistake, for Chancellor d'Ahlefeld cannot be so vile. Besides, I am essential to him. It is impossible you have been sent to execute me. Aid me to escape, or fear the chancellor's anger."

"Did you not say that you were Turiaf Musdoemon?" asked the hangman.

The prisoner hesitated in silence for a moment:

"No," said he suddenly, "my name is not Musdoemon, but Turiaf Orugix."

"Orugix!" exclaimed the hangman. "Orugix?"

He quickly pulled off the wig which hid the face of the condemned man, and gave a stupefied shout:

"My brother!"

"Your brother!" repeated the prisoner joyfully, though a little shame was apparent in the avowal; "are you . . ."

"Nychol Orugix, executioner of the Drontheimhus, at your service, brother Turiaf."

The condemned man threw his arms round the executioner's neck, calling him "his brother, his dear brother!" A witness would in no way have been affected by this show of brotherly affection, for Turiaf's method of pleasing was evidently only for the occasion, and fear had much to do with the smiles he lavished on his brother. Nychol looked gloomy and embarrassed. The scene reminded one of a tiger fawning on an elephant, when the monster's heavy foot weighs on its body and is about to crush him.

"This is fortunate, brother Nychol. I am delighted to see you again."

"And I am sorry for you, brother Turiaf."

The prisoner pretended not to hear, and continued, in a trembling voice :

"You have doubtless a wife and children. You must take me to see my charming sister, and let me embrace my dear nephews."

"By satan's cross!" muttered the hangman.

"I will be a second father to them. Brother, listen to me. I am powerful; I have influence . . ."

The brother answered in a sinister accent :

"I know you had. At present you need only think of the influence you have no doubt managed to secure for yourself with the saints."

The condemned man now gave up all hope.

"Oh, God! what can you mean, dear Nychol? Surely, now that I have found you, I am saved? You and I are sons of the same mother. We shared games in childhood; and remember, Nychol, you are my brother."

"You never remembered it until now," retorted the savage Nychol.

"No, but it is not possible that I should die by my brother's hand."

"Well, it's your own fault, Turiaf. You stopped my career, and prevented me from

being royal executioner at Copenhagen, so here I am nothing but a wretched headsman of a province. If you had not acted as a bad brother, you would not have had to complain of my conduct, which now so disgusts you. I should not have been in the Drontheimhus, and another would have done service for you. Brother, we have said quite enough about it, and you must die."

Death to the wicked is fearful to contemplate, while to the good it seems but rest. Both must leave this mortal coil. The just man views it as a release from his prison-house; while to the wicked it appears like being dragged from a fortress. Hell reveals itself to the perverted soul, which had thought to end in nothingness; and when the spirit stays for a moment at death's door, it finds that its hopes of a void have fled.

The prisoner writhed on the floor, tossed his arms wildly about, and gave the most heart-rending cries, more fearful to hear than the eternal lament of the condemned soul.

"Merciful God! saints of heaven! if you exist, have pity on me. Nychol, my Nychol, in the name of our mother, oh, pray, let me live."

The hangman showed his official mandate.

"I cannot; the order is precise."

"This document cannot concern me," stammered the despairing prisoner. "It relates

to a certain Musdœmon, and I am Turiaf Orugix."

"You are making game of me," said Nychol, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Why, I know it means you. Besides," he added, harshly, "yesterday you would not have owned to your brother that you were Turiaf Orugix, and to-day you were only Turiaf Musdœmon to him."

"Brother! my brother!" pursued the wretched man; "well, then, just wait till to-morrow. It is impossible the grand chancellor can have sent my death-warrant. It is some fearful mistake. Count d'Ahlefeld has real affection for me. Spare my life, I implore you, my dear Nychol. I shall soon regain my former influence, and I will amply requite you for this service."

"You can only render me one, Turiaf," interrupted the hangman. "I have already lost two executions, on which I firmly relied—that of ex-Chancellor Schumacker and the viceroy's son. I am so unfortunate. The only two now remaining are those of the demon and yourself. As your execution is to be conducted in secret at night, it will bring me in twelve golden ducats. The only favor I expect from you is to let me finish all quietly."

"Oh, God!" cried the condemned man, in his agony.

"This is really the first concession, and it shall be the last I shall ever require from you. In return, I promise that you shall not suffer much. I will hang you in all brotherly feeling; so resign yourself."

Musdœmon rose. His lips were blue, and trembling with anger, his teeth chattered, and he foamed at the mouth.

"By satan! to think I should have saved this d'Ahlefeld, and embraced my brother, and in return they would kill me. I am then to die at night in this dark, lonesome cell, without making my curses resound from one end of the kingdom to the other. And must I leave all their crimes unmasked? Was it for such a death as this that I sullied the whole of my life? Wretch," said he, turning to his brother, "would you be a fratricide?"

"I am executioner," replied the phlegmatic Nychol.

"No, I will not die such a death as this," continued he, with flaming eyes, throwing himself with fury on the hangman, like an enraged bull at bay. "I have not lived like the dreaded serpent that I should now be crushed like a worm. I die, but the last sting shall be deadly."

Thus speaking, he grasped in enmity the one he had so lately embraced as a brother.

The fawning and affectionate Musdœmon showed himself in his true colors. He felt the very depths of despair, and after crawling along as a tiger, he rose with all the fury of that wild beast. While the brothers were thus struggling, it would have been difficult to determine which was the most frightful to witness—he who fought with all the blind ferocity of a savage animal, or the other, who battled with all the cunning fury of a devil.

But the four halberdiers, hitherto impassible, soon interfered, and Musdœmon was compelled to give way. He threw himself against the stones with smothered cries, and tore his nails on the stones.

“Am I to die, you devils of perdition? Die! without my cries resounding through these vaults, and all my efforts to be released from these walls prove in vain?”

He was seized, and offered no resistance; he was utterly exhausted by his useless struggle. In order to pinion him, his gown had to be taken off, and a sealed packet fell to the ground.

“What is that?” said the hangman.

An expression of infernal hope came into the prisoner’s eyes.

“How could I have forgotten that?” muttered he. “Listen to me, brother Nychol,” said he, in a friendly tone, “those papers

belong to the grand chancellor. Promise to deliver them to him, and then do what you like with me."

"Now that you are quiet again, I promise to carry out your last wishes, although you have certainly acted in a most unbrotherly way toward me. On Orugix's honor, those papers shall be delivered to the chancellor."

"Hand them to him yourself," said the condemned man, with a strange smile, which the hangman did not understand, as smiles were not much in his way. "The pleasure they will cause his grace may lead to your future advancement."

"Indeed, brother!" said Orugix. "Thank you. Perhaps I may be named royal executioner. What say you? Well, let us part friends. I forgive you the wounds you inflicted on me with your nails, and you forgive me the rope collar I am about to place on you."

"The chancellor promised me another kind of collar," replied Musdœmon.

Then the halberdiers led him, completely pinioned, to the centre of the cell; the hangman passed the fatal noose round his neck.

"Turiaf, are you ready?"

"One minute, just a minute more," implored the condemned man, whose fears had returned with double force. "Have mercy,

brother, pray ; do not pull the rope until I tell you."

"I have no need to pull the rope," replied Orugix.

After a minute's silence, he repeated the question :

"Are you ready?"

"Only another minute. Alas ! must I then die?"

"Turiaf, I have no time for waiting."

While thus speaking he motioned to the halberdiers to draw back.

"Just a word more, brother. Do not fail to deliver that packet to Count d'Ahlefeld."

"Be quite easy on that score," replied his brother ; and then for the third time he repeated the question : "Come, are you ready?"

The miserable wretch was again about to speak, doubtless to implore a moment's reprieve, when the impatient hangman stooped and pressed a brass button which was fixed in the floor.

The planks fell asunder, and the unfortunate man fell into a square trap beneath, amid the vibrations of the rope so suddenly weighed down, which swayed with the convulsions of the dying man. Nothing but the rope was visible without the gloomy pit, from which the sound of a fresh breeze and running water could be distinctly heard.

The halberdiers even drew back in horror. The hangman neared the pit, and seizing the cord which still vibrated, lowered himself until he stood on the shoulders of the victim. The fatal cord stretched and became steady. A smothered sigh came from the trap.

"Good," said the hangman, climbing back into the cell. "Farewell, brother."

He drew a cutlass from his belt.

"Go feed the fishes in the gulf. May your body be the prey of the waters whilst your soul be that of fire."

At these words he cut the stretched cord. The part fastened to the ring flew up to the roof, whilst the body fell into the well and continued underground to the gulf.

The hangman closed the trap as he had opened it. When he stood up, he saw that the cell was full of smoke.

"What is this?" he asked the halberdiers; "whence comes this smoke?"

They were as ignorant as he. Surprised, they opened the door of the cell; the corridors were likewise full of heavy sickening smoke. A secret door passage led them, thoroughly alarmed, to the square court, where a frightful spectacle awaited them.

An immense sheet of flame, fanned by the violence of the east wind, was devouring the military prison and the barracks of the

musketeers. It burst through the roof and windows and around the walls. The black towers of Munckholm were sometimes reddened by the glare and sometimes hidden in the smoke.

A jailer who came running into the court told them in a few words that the fire had started, during the sleep of Han of Iceland's guards, in the monster's cell, to whom some one had been so imprudent as to give straw and fire.

"How unlucky I am!" cried Orugix when he heard this; "see, even Han of Iceland will escape me! The wretch will be burned, and I will not even have his body, although I paid two ducats for it."

Meanwhile the unfortunate Munckholm musketeers, suddenly awakened to their deadly peril, rushed to the heavy door so firmly barricaded. Their cries of anguish and distress could be heard from within. Some were at the fiery windows wringing their hands, others threw themselves into the yard, resolved to meet one death rather than face the other. The whole edifice was in flames before the rest of the garrison could arouse. All help was vain. Fortunately the building was isolated. When they at length succeeded in bursting open the massive door, all was over. At that very moment the roof came down with a crash on

the unfortunate soldiers, bringing down in its fall the whole of the burning building. Nothing could be seen, but from the midst of the fierce flames some feeble shouts could be heard.

The next morning, the blackened fragments of the walls alone were left among the smouldering ashes. When search was made, calcined bones and disfigured lifeless bodies were found among the ruins. Only thirty soldiers remained alive of the fine Munckholm regiment, and most of these were wounded.

When, in clearing away the débris of the prison, they came to the fatal cell where the fire started and which had contained Han of Iceland, they found the remains of a human body, lying near an iron brazier, upon broken chains. It was only observed that among these cinders there were two skulls, although there had been only one body.

LI.

SALADIN.—Bravo, Ibrahim ! You are truly a bearer of good tidings; I thank you for your good news.

THE MAMELUKE.—Good ! But is that all ?

SALADIN.—For what do you wait ?

THE MAMELUKE.—So there is nothing more for the bearer of good tidings.

LESSING—*Nathan the Good.*

Pale and haggard, Count d'Ahlefeld paced his apartment ; he crushed in his clenched hands a packet of letters which he had just read, and stamped his foot on the polished marble floor and the golden fringed carpets.

At the other end of the apartment was standing albeit in an attitude of deep respect, Nychol Orugix, dressed in his infamous purple, and hat in hand.

" You have rendered me a service, Musdœmon," the chancellor muttered behind his breath with suppressed rage.

The hangman timidly raised his stupid face.

" Your grace is satisfied ? "

" What do you want, you ? " said the chancellor, turning roughly.





The hangman, proud to have attracted the chancellor's notice, beamed with hope.

"What do I wish, your grace? The place of executioner at Copenhagen, if your grace deigns to reward with that high favor the good news which I have brought."

The chancellor called two halberdiers of the guard to the door of his apartment.

"Seize that scoundrel! He has had the insolence to set me at defiance."

The two guards dragged the dismayed Nychol off, he tried to say a few more words.

"My lord . . ."

"From this moment you cease to be executioner of the Drontheimhus; I cancel your appointment," exclaimed the chancellor, slamming the door.

The chancellor read and re-read these letters from the Countess to Musdœmon, sure proofs of Elphège's dishonor, as they were in her own handwriting. He is now fully aware that Ulrica is not his daughter, and the still lamented Frederick was perhaps likewise not his son. With the unhappy count pride had brought its own punishment—this failing had been the mainspring of all his crimes. It was no small matter to see his plans of vengeance entirely frustrated; but nothing compared to the knowledge that his dreams of ambition could never be realized—his past dishonored,

his future a total blank. In vainly trying to ruin his enemies he has only succeeded in losing his own reputation, his chief adviser, and even his rights as husband and father.

He resolves to see once more the wretched creature who had deceived him. He passed through the spacious rooms with rapid steps, shaking the letters with fury, until he arrived at Elphège's door. In his rage he threw it violently open.

His guilty wife had suddenly heard the news of her son Frederick's horrible death from Colonel Voethaün. The unfortunate mother was mad.



CL. FA. VRE



Demarest inv

Ci favore se

CONCLUSION

What I said in a joke, you have taken seriously.

SPANISH ROMANCE—*King Alphonse to Bernard.*

During the next fortnight the late events formed the sole topic of conversation throughout the Drontheimhus. The crowd collected in town, who had vainly waited in hopes of witnessing seven executions, now began to despair of having the pleasure.

Old women, half blind, averred that on the night of the incendiarism they had seen Han of Iceland fly away in the flame, laughing in the midst of the fire, as he hurled the burning roof on the Munckholm musketeers.

After a short absence, which to Ethel seemed ages, Ordener returned to the Lion of Sleswig Tower, accompanied by General Levin de Knud and the chaplain, Athanasius Munder.

Schumacker was in the garden, leaning on his daughter's arm. The newly-married couple had to content themselves with exchanging a loving look. Schumacker pressed the young

man's hand affectionately, and bowed cordially to the two strangers.

"Young friend," said the old captive, "may Heaven bless your return."

"My lord," replied Ordener, "I have just left my father at Berghen, and I have come to embrace my father at Drontheim."

"What can you mean?" inquired the old man, astonished.

"Will you give me your daughter, my noble lord?"

"My daughter!" exclaimed the prisoner, turning toward the flushed and trembling Ethel.

"Yes, my lord. I love your Ethel; I have devoted my whole life to her; she is truly mine."

Schumacker's brow darkened.

"My son, you are most noble and worthy; and though your father injured me, I freely forgive him for your sake. I would gladly sanction this union, if it were not for one great obstacle."

"What is that?" said Ordener, anxiously.

"You love my daughter; but are you really sure she loves you?"

The lovers gave each other a surprised glance.

"Yes," continued Schumacker, "I regret that it should be so, as I am attached to you,

and nothing would please me more than to know you were my son. But my daughter will not consent. Since your departure she recently expressed her aversion to you, and whenever I mentioned your name she tried in every way to turn the conversation, as though the subject were distasteful to her. Ordener, give up this idea. Believe me, love has its curse as well as hatred."

"My lord!" exclaimed Ordener, stupefied.

"Father," said Ethel, imploringly, with clasped hands.

"My child, do not distress yourself," interposed the old man. "I approve of this marriage, but the idea seems displeasing to you. I will not wound your feelings, Ethel; a great change has come over me during the last fortnight. I will not attempt to overcome your repugnance for Ordener. You are free."

Athanasius Munder smiled.

"She is not," said he.

"You are mistaken, noble father," added Ethel boldly. "I do not hate Ordener."

"What!" cried the father.

"I am . . ." replied Ethel. She stopped. Ordener knelt before the old man.

"She is my wife, father! Pardon me as my other father has already pardoned me, and bless your children."

Schumacker, astonished in turn, blessed the young couple kneeling before him.

"I have had so much cursing in my life," said he, "that I now seize, without any questioning, all occasions for blessing. But now explain to me . . ."

They explained all to him. He wept tenderly from gratitude and love.

"I thought myself clear-sighted, I am old, and I have not understood a young girl's heart."

"I am to call myself Ordener Guldenlew's!" said Ethel with childish joy.

"Ordener Guldenlew," continued old Schumacker, "you are a far better man than I ever was, for, in my prosperity, I would certainly never have degraded myself by uniting with me the poor and degraded daughter of an unfortunate outlaw."

The general took the prisoner's hand and gave him a roll of parchment:

"My lord count, do not speak thus. Here are your titles which the king had already sent to you by Dispelsen. His majesty has given you pardon and liberty as a dowry for the Countess of Danneskiold, your daughter."

"Pardon! Liberty!" repeated Ethel, overjoyed.

"Countess of Danneskiold!" added the father.

"Yes, count," continued the general, "you recover all your honors, all your property is restored."

"To whom do I owe all that?" asked the happy Schumacker.

"To General Levin de Knud," answered Ordener.

"Levin de Knud! Then I was right, Governor General, Levin de Knud, is the best of men. But why has he not himself come to bring me this happiness? Where is he?"

Ordener pointed with astonishment to the general who was smiling and weeping at the same time:

"There he is!"

The meeting of those two old companions of youth and greatness was a touching scene. Schumacker's heart at last gave vent to his feelings. In meeting Han of Iceland he had ceased to hate men; in meeting Ordener and Levin he learned to love them.

Soon fine feasts solemnized the marriage in the cell. Life began to smile on the young couple who had smiled on death. Count d'Ahlefeld saw them happy: it was his cruelest punishment.

Athanasius Munder also had his joy. He obtained the pardon of his twelve criminals, and Ordener added that of his old companions in misfortune, Kennybol, Jonas and Norbith,

who returned free and joyful to the peaceful miners to announce that the king had remitted the tax.

Schumacker did not long enjoy the union of Ethel and Ordener; liberty and happiness had upset his mind: he went to enjoy other happiness and other liberty. He died in the same year, 1699, and this sorrow taught the young people that there is no perfect happiness on earth. He was buried in the church at Veer, in ground in Jutland, owned by his son-in-law, and the tomb bore all his titles which captivity had taken away from him. The alliance of Ordener and Ethel founded the future family of the Counts of Danne-skiold.

NOTES

¹ Name of the morgue at Drontheim.

² Bird which gives eiderdown. The Norwegian peasants make nests for them in order that they may surprise, and pluck them.

³ Odelsrecht, a singular law by which Norwegian peasants had a right to repurchase their holdings, by giving notice to that effect every ten years, thus preventing the present tenant from disposing of the same.

⁴ Bran bread eaten by the poorer class in Norway.

⁵ Bloodright, perquisite of the headsman.

⁶ The waters of Lake Sparbo are renowned for tempering steel.

⁷ Frederick III. was the dupe of Borch or Borrichius, a Danish chemist, and, above all, of Borri, a Milanese charlatan, who called himself the favorite of the archangel Michael. This impostor, after having astonished Strasbourg and Amsterdam with his pretended prodigies, enlarged the sphere of his ambition and the audacity of his deceits; after having cheated the people, he dared to cheat kings. He commenced with Queen Christine at Hamburg and ended with Frederick at Copenhagen.

⁸ The sea dogs are dreaded by fishermen, because they frighten the fish.

⁹ The ancient lords of Norway, before Griffenfeld founded a regular nobility, bore the titles of *hersa*, baron, or *jarl*, count. The English word earl is derived from the latter.

¹⁰ The fisherman's patron.

¹¹ Grave differences indeed took place between Denmark and Sweden because Count d'Ahlefeld had asked a treaty giving to the king of Denmark the title *rex Gothorum*, which seemed to attribute to the Danish monarch the sovereignty of Gothland, a Swedish province; whilst the Swedes only wished to grant him the title of *rex Gotorum*, a vague denomination equivalent to the ancient title of the Danish sovereigns, *king of the Goths*. It was this *k*, the cause, not of a war, but of long and menacing negotiations, to which Schumacker no doubt alluded.

¹² Some chroniclers assert that in 1525 a Bishop of Borglum rendered himself famous by various brigandages. He was in league, it was said, with the pirates who infested the coast of Norway.

¹³ According to popular belief *Nysthjem* was the hell to which all went who died of sickness or old age.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

HAN OF ICELAND

VOLUME II

	PAGE
The Court	<i>Frontispiece</i>
The bear looked on the two enemies with the utmost indifference	<i>Facing</i> 7
In the house of Christopher Buldus Braall	" 37
The Palace of Han of Iceland	" 57
Between Drontheim and Skongen	" 71
The figures descended into the earth	" 81
A short man hailed another	" 105
No other leader than their cross-bearer	" 109
Ethel fell fainting	" 113
Kennybol and Stayper	" 125
Baron Vœthaün was about to enter his hotel	" 141
The defile of the Black post	" 145
The executioner and his family	" 171
She gazed through the grill	" 185
Stabbed the musketeer to the heart	" 231
Oglypiglap carried the casket to the bishop	" 243
Schumacker and Han	" 247
	299

	PAGE
The Bishop of Drontheimhus	<i>Facing</i> 249
Han in chains	" 263
Tender my best thanks to his grace	" 271
The unfortunate mother was mad	" 289
Conclusion	" 291

